# MOUNTAIN PEAKS IN THE LIFE OF OUR LORD

WILLIAM BANCROFT HILL

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*By William Bancroft Hill, D.D., Litt.D*

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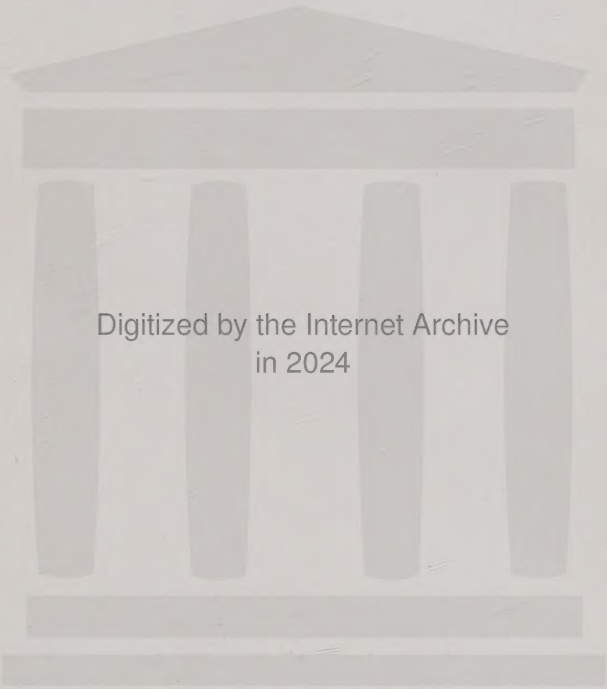

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GETHSEMANE

The olive trees of the Garden, old, broken, distorted, stand as memorials of the Agony.

# Mountain Peaks in the Life of Our Lord

By

WILLIAM BANCROFT HILL, D. D., LITT. D.

*Author of "The Life of Christ," "The Apostolic Age," etc.*

Wm Bancroft Hill.

*ILLUSTRATED*

NEW YORK CHICAGO

Fleming H. Revell Company

LONDON AND EDINBURGH

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FLEMING H. REVELL COMPANY

*Printed in the United States of America*

New York: 158 Fifth Avenue
Chicago: 17 North Wabash Ave.
London: 21 Paternoster Square
Edinburgh: 75 Princes Street

*To the*
*Dear Memory*
*of*
*Virginia W.*

# PREFACE

WHEN first I made a pilgrimage through Palestine, more than thirty years ago, I was impressed with the fact that most of the great events, the mountain peaks, in the life of our Lord took place on some hillside or mountain top. And when I returned, I wrote for myself and my friends a sketch of that life in which I sought to make the prominent points in His ministry stand out distinctly in the setting He chose for them. Later visits to Palestine and a prolonged study of His life have led me to enlarge this sketch and offer it to a wider circle.

Unlike my *Life of Christ,* this little book is not for the critical student, though I trust it will bear his study. I have had in mind the general reader, who shrinks back from the dryness of a textbook or the bulkiness of an exhaustive narrative, but does wish to gain a clear idea of just what Jesus was trying to do in the successive periods of His public ministry and how far He succeeded or failed. If I mistake not, he wants a book that can be read in snatches or at a sitting, that places emphasis upon the important events, that quickens his own imagination without leading it astray, and that finds in the gospel story the spiritual

nourishment for which the soul of man is ever hungry. Whether I have produced such a book, others must decide. I have tried to do so and can, at least, cherish the joy of the attempt.

The illustrations prefacing the chapters are from photographs taken nearly forty years ago. They have been chosen in preference to those of recent date because they more nearly set before us the land that Jesus knew. The tramp of armies and the shrill voices of tourists have wakened Palestine from its sleep of centuries; and railways, auto roads, new buildings and modern ploughs are rapidly transforming its sacred scenes. Such changes, whether we approve or deplore them, make us value increasingly all pictures secured before they came.

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### MAP


Palestine in the Time of Christ . . . . . 11

PALESTINE
IN THE
TIME OF CHRIST
0 5 10 20 30 40
SCALE OF MILES
35°
36°
33°
32°
31°
Sidon
Zarephath
Tyre
Ladder of Tyre
PHENICIA
Lebanon
R. Leontes
ITUREA
Anti-Lebanon
Mt. Hermon
Damascus
PANIAS
Dan
Cæsarea Philippi
ITUREA
TRACHONITIS
UPPER GALILEE
Waters of Merom (L. Huleh)
R. Jordan
TETRARCHY OF PHILIP
BATANEA
AURANITIS
Seleucia
Ramah
Safed
Bethsaida Julias
Chorazin
Capernaum
Ptolemais
Bay of Acre
GALILEE
Sea of Galilee
Magdala
Cerasa
Ashtaroth
Kurn Hattin
Gamala
Cana
Tiberias
Hippos
Yarmuk
Bethlehem
Nazareth
Mt. Tabor
Abila
Kanata
Esdraelon
R. Kishon
LOWER GALILEE
R. Gadara
Nain
Edrei
Megiddo
Jezreel
Scythopolis (Bethshan)
Bethabara
Cæsarea
Mt. Carmel
Plain of Sharon
Mt. Gilboa
DECAPOLIS
Salim(?)
Pella
Dium
Aenon(?)
SAMARIA
Samaria
Gerasa
Apollonia
Shechem
Sychar
Jacob's Well
Mt. Ebal
Mt. Gerizim
Jordan
R. Jabbok
Antipatris
Joppa
Phasaelis
Arimathea
Archelais(?)
Thamna
GILEAD
PEREA
Gophna
Lydda
Ephraim
Philadelphia
Bethel
Jamnia
Ekron
Emmaus
Jericho
Emmaus(?)
Livias
Julias
Heshbon
Mt. of Olives
Jerusalem
Bethany
Nebo
Ashdod
Azotus
Kidron
Bethlehem
Herodium
Ashkelon
JUDEA
Callirrhoe
Eleutheropolis
Bethzur
Machaerus
Gaza
Hebron
Dibon
R. Arnon
Dead Sea
Masada
Beersheba
Wilderness of Judea
IDUMEA
MOAB
Rehoboth
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Longitude East from Greenwich

# I

## THE MOUNT OF THE PREPARATION

OF all the places in Palestine—and they are not many—where the traveller can say with confidence, "Here once Our Lord must have stood," none is more certain and satisfying than the summit of the ridge back of Nazareth. The little town slipped down into the valley as the centuries went by, so the streets of to-day are not the streets of old; but the lonely summit of the hill with the wonderful view it commands, remains as in the days of the Christ. Looking from it to the west one sees the long, bold promontory of Carmel framed on either side by a blue strip of the Mediterranean. Far away to the north gleams Safed, "a city set on a hill," with the snowy heights of Hermon beyond it. Nearer at hand to the eastward are Tabor and Gilboa and the Jordan valley backed by the mountains of Gilead. And looking to the south there meet the eye, first the little valley in which nestles the village of Nazareth, then the broad, green plain of Esdraelon dotted by Shunem and Nain and Endor, and beyond these the hills of Samaria and the dim outline of the mountains of Judea. The whole panorama is eloquent with voices of the past; and there is no place more inviting for one who would medi-

tate upon the long and varied history of Israel. Beyond question it must have been a favourite resort for Jesus when He lived in Nazareth. Hither after the day's work was ended, He would climb to watch the sun go down in splendour into the western sea; and here on a Sabbath afternoon He would sit and ponder upon the fortunes of His people or His own future destiny. Let us look at Him first as a boy of twelve, musing here over the experiences of His recent and wonderful journey to Jerusalem.

The preface to the journey was when Joseph gravely said, " My lad, you are now old enough to become a son of the law, and take its burden upon yourself. Hitherto I have been responsible for all your acts; henceforth that responsibility must rest upon you. I am allowed to bear it no longer." That hour was to Him, as to every Jewish boy, a time of real spiritual development. The carelessness of childhood ceased; the seriousness of life was realized; the solemnity of personal accountability for each thought and act was borne in upon the soul. Would that in the present day, when so often our young people refuse to be bound by law and scoff at the suggestion of responsibility, some such hour of sobering thought might be wrought into their lives.

The journey up to Jerusalem with the company that set forth from Nazareth was for the Boy a succession of new and stimulating experiences.

NAZARETH

No other spot in Palestine seems to bring Jesus so close to our daily life with its common joys and

They passed place after place, each rich in historical associations,—famous scenes of great events which were narrated and discussed and moralized upon. They cheered the weary hours of travel by singing pilgrim psalms: "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go unto the house of Jehovah"; "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so Jehovah is round about His people." They grew more eager and excited as they drew near the sacred city. And when at last it burst upon their sight, and across the valley of the Kedron they saw its ancient walls, its clustered houses, its imposing palaces, and chief of all, the dazzling marble and gold of the new temple of Herod, their joy knew no bounds. "Our feet are standing within thy gates, O Jerusalem; Jerusalem that is builded as a city that is compact together. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For the sake of the house of Jehovah I will seek thy good." It would be hard to overemphasize the effect of such a journey upon an eager, receptive, heavenly-minded lad.

The days that followed were full of deeply spiritual hours, the chief of which was the evening when Jesus for the first time partook of a Passover supper. The feast was held in a room loaned for that purpose by some friend; and the host who provided the lamb and its prescribed accompaniments may have been Joseph himself. The full moon poured a soft light through the open door

and windows; and the sound of hymns sung in all the neighbouring houses blended with their own words or songs. Each part of the meal was accompanied by prayers or psalms of thanksgiving, and each viand and act commemorated some experience in the great deliverance of Israel from Egypt. The meaning of it all would be explained to the Boy while they ate; and it could not fail to awaken in Him a new recognition of the might and wisdom and goodness of Jehovah who had so wonderfully overthrown the hosts of Pharaoh and broken the yoke of the oppressor.

The temple, too, with its magnificent buildings, overpowering to one who had known only the simple synagogue at Nazareth, and with its stately and elaborate services, must have impressed Jesus deeply. No other place in all Jerusalem had such attraction for Him. It was the house of God,—His Father's house. He rejoiced to be in it. He spent large portions of each day there. And when He found that by some oversight His parents had started on the homeward journey without Him, He waited for them in its courts, confident that when they missed Him and returned, they would know exactly where to find Him. But there was much about the temple that surprised and pained Him. In the great outer court were Roman soldiers stolidly keeping guard against a possible riot, and Greek or Egyptian sightseers looking about with idle curiosity, and hucksters and traders and

money-changers loudly proclaiming their wares. Pharisees and Sadducees wrangled over points of doctrine; Judean worshippers muttered their contempt of the Galileans; priests pushed through the crowd impatient of humble pilgrims with scanty offerings. Was this a house of prayer or was it in reality a place of traffic? And when the Boy passed onward through the Court of the Women into the Court of Israel where He could look into the Court of the Priests, He saw before Him little that seemed spiritual. Scores of men in sacred robes were labouring as butchers, swiftly killing and skinning and cutting up the passover lambs, cleansing the entrails and piling the fat upon the great altar from which a column of black, greasy smoke arose unceasingly. Beyond them the doors of the Holy Place stood open; but the feeble light of the seven-branched lamp-stand and the dim glow of the coals on the altar of incense failed to reveal its contents. Could these surroundings bring to Him such a sense of intimate communion with God as had made sacred certain hours upon the hilltop back of Nazareth?

In someone of the numerous chambers and porches of the temple learned rabbis during the Passover season sat as teachers for any who might desire instruction concerning difficult points of the Law. And while the Boy waited for His parents, He discovered them and joined the group that surrounded them. His eager attention, so un-

usual in a mere lad, attracted their notice; and they encouraged Him to speak by asking His opinion of the problems they were discussing. The rabbis always were interested in the impression any matter of the Law produced upon the mind of a thoughtful child. The approval with which they received His replies, emboldened Him to question them in turn. There were matters over which He had puzzled and pondered, and concerning which the men who taught in the synagogue at Nazareth could give him no help: surely these great scholars would be able to tell Him all He wished to know. And so it came to pass that when His parents found Him, He had become, unintentionally and unconsciously, the central figure of the group. The grave rabbis bent forward with eager attention as He spoke; and turned to one another with looks of amazement at His questions and replies. What a wonderful child this was!

We need not suppose that the Boy possessed supernatural wisdom, or was in any way distinguished from a normal human child, save in His sinlessness. He spake as a child, but as a child who lived in daily touch with God and found the heavenly side of life as natural and necessary as the earthly side. In His own experience already He was verifying the Beatitude, which later He proclaimed, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." This was what gave Him an "understanding,"—a ready grasp and quick

solving of spiritual problems, amazing to the rabbis. He talked about God in the simplest, most direct way, calling Him " My Father." What did He mean by the term? I think He meant just what He wishes us to mean when, as He taught us, we say " Our Father." To suppose that at this period of His life He recognized His unique sonship and in calling God Father made Himself one with God, is contrary to the statement of Luke that as a child He " increased in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man "; and it makes His childhood something so strange and unnatural that we could not point to Him as the high example for our own children. The day was to come when He would say " My Father " with a relationship in the words such as no other being can claim; but that day was not yet. Probably the rabbis were not surprised to hear Him call God Father; they used that term themselves, and taught their children to use it. But in the lips of this child it had a confidence, an intimacy, they never had encountered; it expressed implicit trust and perfect love and closest companionship. No wonder they were amazed and tested Him with questions, seeking to discover whether His thought of God was as simple, reverent and satisfying as it seemed to be. Even to-day, after nineteen centuries of Christian teaching, how rarely do we think of God as " Our Father " in all the richness of the content of that word!

Back in Nazareth once more, Jesus has sought His favourite spot on the hilltop, and is thinking over the experiences of that first Passover visit. There is a troubled look upon the lad's face. The journey to Jerusalem has brought Him much; but it has sadly failed to bring all He anticipated and longed for. He did not find God nearer there than here. The Holy City was full of things unholy,—not only the foul pleasures of the Romans, but also the selfishness and hypocrisy and worldly-mindedness of its Jewish citizens. The temple, which at first so deeply impressed Him, proved on closer acquaintance to be a center of formalism and greed, in which haughty priests ministered in the name of God to heap up riches for themselves and their children. And, worst of all, the rabbis to whom He had looked as the wisest of men in the things of God, revealed themselves as purblind guides, repeating lessons never fully grasped, and unable to give the teaching He yearned to receive. Why was it? He was willing to learn; why could they not teach Him? Had God ceased to speak to His people as once of old He spake? If the rabbis could not teach, where was there a teacher? Suppose that He Himself were older and wiser, would He dare to undertake the task? And if He did, who would listen? Thus pondering and perplexed He communes with His soul, as the sun goes down and the shadows

thicken. Thus, too, the first shadows come into His life, and the outline of His future mission begins to grow distinct against the darkness. "Wist ye not that I must be in My Father's house?" is slowly changing into "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" The hilltop is, indeed, the Mount of Preparation.

Years go by. The lad of twelve becomes a man of thirty. Despite His early dreams of wider usefulness, He still remains in Nazareth, a humble artisan toiling as breadwinner for His family. To be sure, the family is now grown very small. Joseph has long been dead; the brothers have reached manhood and gone to Capernaum, Cana and elsewhere to make homes of their own; the sisters, though yet in the village, are married; and His mother alone remains as His charge,—an active woman of middle age, much disposed to deem Him still in need of her guidance because He is so obedient to her wishes. The people of the village, without any seeking on His part, have learned to look upon Him as their leader in all good things. They come to Him when perplexed for words of counsel, and when sorrow-stricken for words of comfort. In the synagogue there is no one whom the rulers more often invite to read the Sabbath lessons from the sacred rolls, and to give an exposition of their meaning. A charm about Him as He speaks is felt by all; and the

earnestness and spiritual discernment of His words impress even the most thoughtless.

While no one in Nazareth is more loved than Jesus, no one is more lonely. Beyond His frankness and friendliness, there is a barrier of reserve which His closest friends cannot cross; His innermost thoughts are a sanctuary whose veil is never lifted. Simple in His ways, and direct in His words, He nevertheless is an enigma even to those who know Him best. Other men can easily be described by some prominent characteristic; but in Him qualities seemingly contradictory are balanced so perfectly that none can be selected as distinctive. He is humble and willing to yield to others, yet absolutely independent and, if need be, imperative. He is genial and ready to join in all innocent festivities, yet there is something of sadness underlying His merriment, and He loves solitude. He is hardworking, economical and thrifty, but shows no desire for wealth or the abundance of things that money buys. He is gentle and indulgent, but His anger when roused by acts of injustice, foulness or cruelty is like a burning fire. He is interested in all that pertains to the welfare of His village and the progress of His nation; nevertheless, local and national ties rest lightly upon Him, as if He were in reality a citizen of another land. Thus, though He has lived as boy and man in their midst, He remains a mystery to

the villagers. Perhaps the little children come nearest to understanding Him: certainly they love Him with all their hearts, and are loved most fondly in return.

Let us look at Jesus again in the last of His many hours upon the Mount of Preparation. The years of toil and varied experience have written their record upon His outward form. His hands are calloused; His shoulders somewhat bowed; His forehead has lines of care and sorrow; and His smile, though just as sweet as in boyhood, comes less often. Through His intense keenness of sympathy He has entered far into the depths of human sorrow and suffering, and the record is written indelibly upon His face. As He sits there now, His thoughts are centered upon tidings which in recent months have been coming from Judea. John, the son of Zacharias, is baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming that the Messiah is soon to appear. Men from Capernaum and even from Nazareth have gone to see and hear him, and have returned with abundant but conflicting reports. The town is buzzing with excitement. Is John truly a prophet like those of old? Has he a right to preach and baptize? Can it be possible that the Messiah is close at hand? What will He be and do when He does come? Here are questions for which Jesus must seek an answer most carefully, since they bear directly upon His

own future course. There is plenty to ponder over in this hour upon the Mount.

John is His kinsman. Mary has revealed this to Him with all the story of John's birth,—the vision in the temple, the promise given by the angel, the dumbness that sealed the father's lips, her own visit to Elizabeth, and the great rejoicing when the child was circumcised. She never had spoken of these things before; now she rehearsed them at length and seemed relieved to tell them. But Mary remained silent concerning a matter of far greater moment,—the birth of her own child. Courage to speak of it failed her. Throughout the years she had pondered it in her heart, but guarded it from others. At first the shame it had brought upon her,—the sneers of her own sex, the malicious smiles of foul-minded men—had been like a sword piercing her soul. As the years went by, the taunts ceased; but she feared they might rekindle through even a chance word. Who would do anything but scoff, if she declared that her child was divinely begotten? As for her Son, she could not tell Him about it when He was a little lad; and when He grew older the task seemed increasingly difficult. What would be the effect, if she did tell Him? Would He believe her, or deem her demented? And if He did believe her, what would He do? Joseph was dead; so there was no one with whom she could take counsel.

Sometimes, as she watched her boy quietly toiling at the bench or patiently performing the everyday duties of life, it seemed as if the whole story of His birth was a wonderful dream or belonged to some other existence. This news about John brought back most vividly the promise that her child was to be the long-expected Messiah; but how this could come to pass she found it impossible to imagine. Certainly nothing in the present indicated that some day He would have the throne of His great ancestor, David. No! Let the matter rest. He bore the name of Jesus which the angel had given. If He was to do more, God would certainly indicate it by some wonderful sign.

Concerning the work John is doing, there is much that Jesus must now consider carefully and prayerfully. John is denouncing the sins of the people as fiercely and fearlessly as a second Elijah. Doubtless there is justification for every word he utters; but will a reformation caused by fear prove really permanent or beneficial? The wrath of God ought to be proclaimed; but why does he say nothing about the love of God? And he declares that the Messiah, when He comes, will be still more fierce against all evil-doers. Is, then, destruction of the wicked the true Messianic mission? How runs the ancient prophecy, "A bruised reed will He not break; and a dimly burning wick

will He not quench"? "His name shall be called Prince of Peace." Is John right or mistaken?

John baptizes all who repent of their sins and are ready to welcome the Messiah. This is a work so novel and distinctive that they call him The Baptizer. He treats all Israelites as if they really were Gentiles, and his own company of people prepared for the Messiah formed the true Israel into which others are to be received, as proselytes are received, by confessing their sins and renouncing their former life and being washed with pure water. This seems a righteous work: can Jesus Himself have a place in it? If He is to join John's company, He must be baptized. But He has no sins to confess when John shall question Him. It may be hard to make the Baptizer believe this; and when he does, he may not be willing to baptize Him. Still, if John's work is of God, He ought to help in it; and baptism will show that He is ready to take His part along with the others.

John says that the Messiah is soon to come. How will He come? Men are discussing this eagerly, and putting forth all sorts of opinions. Some hold that He will appear in the clouds of heaven with supernatural splendour and with power to slay all His foes by the breath of His mouth, giving their lands and wealth to the faithful. Others maintain that He is to spring from the root of Jesse, a mighty warrior and wonderful

counsellor, who by force of arms will bring back to the Jews all the glory of Solomon's day. Of these two views the former is the more popular because it appeals more strongly to imagination and vindictive desires. Jesus can accept neither of them: both are too earthly. The Messiah is the Son of the Most High, and surely will be in spirit like His Father whose heart cherishes love towards even His enemies, and whose kingdom is purely spiritual. John must be wrong in proclaiming a Messiah of vengeance; and these men are wrong who long for a kingdom of earthly power and splendour. He whom God raises up to shepherd His people will be one who by life and word and loving service shall teach men that God is love, and win them to love Him as they ought. "The spirit of Jehovah shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Jehovah. And with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth."

Where is such an one to be found? Isaiah, who foresaw the Messiah's work most clearly, declares that it is a mission full of suffering, in which the sins of the people are borne without complaint even to a death most undeserved. Who would be willing and who would be able to carry it through? Would I? This is a question that has forced itself

upon the thought of Jesus more than once as He studied the Scriptures. If My Father should call me to this high and sorrowful task, would I obey the call? Hitherto He has asked Himself this simply to test His consecration. Now the work of John compels Him to ask it as a light on His future course. The people are being prepared for the Messiah; some one must go forth to do the Messianic work. If God says, Whom shall we send; and who will go for us?, shall the reply be, Here am I, Lord, send me? The question is not to be answered without hesitation, yet that which makes Him hold back is not fear of suffering but a recognition of the magnitude of such a mission. Would it not be presumption to believe that God will send me on this highest of missions? Is not some other of His servants,—John himself, it may be,—better fitted and far more worthy? And yet dare I, would I, draw back, if I was sure that He commanded me to go? Surely there is but one answer, Behold thy servant, Lord; use me according to thy will.

When this hour in the Mount is ended and Jesus goes down never to return, the next step in His life is determined. He will leave His mother in the care of her other children; they are able and willing to care for her; and He will seek out John. What lies beyond that step He cannot see. Peradventure, He will be required only to labour

with John in preparing the people for the Messiah. That is a work He would gladly do. But it may be the divine purpose to call Him to the higher, harder work of the Messiah. If so, His Father will clearly give the call, and with it the needed strength and wisdom and grace.

## II

## THE MOUNT OF THE TEMPTATION

UP from the valley of the Jordan to the little village of Bethany hard by Jerusalem, stretches the Wilderness of Judea. It is a desolate, dreary, barren land to-day; and there are no signs that it has ever been anything else. In its deep gorges Elijah hid from the wrath of Ahab; among its hills and valleys John the Baptist made his early home; and hither Our Lord was driven by the Spirit, immediately after His baptism, to meet the adversary in lonely struggle, and gain the first victory of His Messianic ministry.

On the eastern side of the Wilderness, high above the plains of Jericho, towers Jebel Karantel —the Mountain of Temptation. Its gray limestone sides, steep and ragged, are honeycombed with caverns where in the Middle Ages whole colonies of hermits made their home, and where even to-day a few devout Abyssinian Christians keep fast and vigil through the days of Lent. Other habitation on the mountain there is none, and its bleak summit offers neither the shade of

JEBEL KARANTEL

In its bleak and barren loneliness this mountain impresses us as a fit arena for the battle of Jesus with

a tree nor the refreshment of a draught of water. The tradition that this was the scene of the temptation originated with the Crusaders and is, therefore, of little value; but Dr. Thomson says truly, " If the intention was to meet and conquer the arch enemy of God and man in a lonely and blasted wilderness, none could be found better suited for the purpose than this Jebel Karantel and its surroundings."

The view from this mountaintop eastward in the time of Christ, when the plain below was peopled and tilled and when Jericho was a beautiful, wealthy city, embowered in palms, must have been wonderfully attractive; yet it fails completely to support a literal statement that from this height the devil " sheweth Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them." Nor is there a mountain anywhere from which such a panorama could be had. How, then, about the story of the temptation: shall we study it as a record of outward or of inward experience? The bodily presence of Satan, the translation to the pinnacle of the Temple, the vision from the exceeding high mountain,—are these details literal or figurative?

When seeking to answer this question one fact, too often ignored, should be borne in mind:—whatever is known about the Temptation must originally have been told by Jesus Himself. The other recorded chapters of His life had human witnesses. Mary could tell of His infancy; Peter,

James and John were with Him in the Mount of Transfiguration and the Garden of Gethsemane; but only wild beasts were His companions in the Wilderness. Moreover, this seems to have been the only one of the solitary experiences of Jesus that He did reveal to His disciples. He spent nights alone in desert places and mountains, but concerning these we know merely that they were nights of prayer; whether angels ministered to Him, whether patriarchs and prophets came to converse with Him, whether as He prayed He became transfigured, we are not told. And concerning what took place in that mysterious interval between His death and resurrection, we know absolutely nothing, except the promise to the dying thief, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." The revelation of the Temptation is thus unique.

His statement concerning His experiences in the Wilderness must be interpreted in harmony with other similar statements by Him. For example, in determining whether Satan appeared in bodily form we should compare "The tempter came to him" with "The prince of this world cometh" (John 14:30); and "Then the devil leaveth him" with "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven" (Luke 10:18); and "Get thee hence, Satan" with similar words spoken to Peter (Mark 8:33). His customary way of speaking about Satan will throw light upon the present narrative,

because the present narrative originally was His. Moreover, since the Temptation was essentially a spiritual experience, we need to inform ourselves of the manner in which Jesus usually depicted such spiritual experiences. "Behold, Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat" (Luke 22:31); "This woman whom Satan hath bound" (Luke 13:16); "Straightway cometh Satan, and taketh away the word" (Mark 4:15): if we do not give these words a literal interpretation, why should we search our atlases for a suitable high mountain, and suggest, as some absurdly have done, that by refraction all the kingdoms of the world might become visible therefrom in a moment of time? In short, Christ's account of His struggle with Satan must not be understood as we understand Matthew's account of the casting out of devils from the demoniac of Gadara. We may not conclude that it is a parable; but we must not forget that it is an attempt to make earthly hearers comprehend matters belonging to the world of spirits,—a world of which we can know so little that any statement to be intelligible must to some degree be figurative.

Even if Jesus had been doubtful about His Messianic mission before His baptism, all uncertainty ended at that hour. The voice from heaven, "Thou art my beloved Son," was a clear statement that He was the Messiah; and the descent of the Holy Spirit was the final preparation for

His appointed work. The Father had called Him to found the Kingdom of God upon earth, and to bring all men into it. Tremendous as was the task, He did not draw back; but before He could enter upon it, He must first determine how it could be accomplished. How could He draw all men unto Himself, and through Himself to His Father? His future course hinged on the answer to this question: and in search of an answer He was driven by the Spirit into the wilderness where in loneliness He could think the matter through. Day after day He wandered there fasting. The fast was involuntary: He was so absorbed in thought that bodily wants were unnoticed. We remember how His absorbing conversation with the woman at Jacob's well made Him forget entirely His weariness and hunger. That the fast should continue for forty days is not incredible. Men who in recent times have sought to imitate it, have met with poor success; but they lacked the perfect body with its unmarred powers of endurance that belonged to the Son of Mary. Later on in His public ministry, when the touch of the needy multitude had been a continual drain upon His powers, physical exhaustion came more quickly: but now it was not until He had gone without food for forty days that the limit of endurance was reached and "He was an hungered." And, in this hour of weakness, the struggle, which

had been going on throughout the whole period, culminated in the three great temptations.

What were the temptations? Let us seek to enter reverently into the thoughts of Our Lord in this hour of conflict on Jebel Karantel. They all center around one problem, How best can I, the Son of God, persuade my countrymen to accept me as their Messiah and Saviour? For, if He can win the Jews, then—as the prophets foretold—they will become missionaries to all the world, and through their labours the Kingdom of God will speedily be established. The tempter is ready with a most promising program, suggested by Christ's own hunger:—"Command that these stones become bread." Life is hard in Palestine and everywhere. From the day when he was driven out of Eden man must sweat for his daily bread and ever be anxious about what to-morrow has in store. Weakness, disease, suffering are his lot; and death comes speedily. Must it always be so? The Jews are dreaming of a Golden Age when the curse shall be lifted. How often Jesus has heard some fellow-toiler say, as he paused to straighten his aching back, "When the Messiah comes, we shall not have to work any more: He will feed us as Moses fed our fathers in the wilderness; and He will drive away all sickness and sorrow. Would that He were here now!" The Son of God has the power to turn stones into bread; He can feed the hungry and heal the sick

and raise the dead and banish all the hardships of life. And if He will do this, which the people are expecting the Messiah will do, then with wild enthusiasm they will hail Him as the Promised One, and scramble for a place in His kingdom. But what kind of subjects will they be? Drawn to Him by hunger for only earthly things, will they listen to Him with any desire when He tells them of heavenly things? "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." And what is true life? The Scripture says, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." The Messiah's mission is to satisfy, not the hunger of the body but the hunger of the soul. Jesus must hold Himself steadily to that, and not forsake it for a lesser work.

One temptation overcome, another follows. The Jews are ever quoting a prophecy that declares, "The Lord whom ye seek will suddenly come to His temple"; and they vie with one another in imagining the startling, wonderful manner in which He will come. Why should Jesus not meet their expectations, and thus lead them to accept Him? Suppose, so the tempter suggests, that at the hour of sacrifice, when rulers and people are thronging the temple and praying for the coming of the Messiah, you descend from heaven borne on the wings of angels; nothing more will be needed to make them believe on you. The

chief priests will prostrate themselves in adoration; the rabbis will accept you without a question; and the Sanhedrin will proclaim to the whole nation,—to the Jews in Alexandria and Rome as well as in Jerusalem,—that the Messiah's reign is begun. So easily and quickly your great desire can be accomplished. The answer to this temptation is, What of the nature of the Kingdom thus established,—will it be the Kingdom of Heaven? A faith based upon miracles has in it nothing spiritual, and a craving to see the marvellous does not awaken willingness to hear the still, small voice of the Spirit. The children of Israel, who would not follow Moses except he wrought signs and wonders, were given what they desired; but at the end they perished in the wilderness because of their unbelief. Against their fate remains the eternal warning, "Thou shalt not make trial of the Lord thy God." Can it be ignored?

There is still a third temptation. Rome sits secure, the mistress of the world. Her power reaches out in all directions: her armies trample down all nations; her law is the final word of command; her emperor is worshipped as a god. Shall not the kingdom of the Messiah be even more mighty and splendid? And how did Rome gain her mastery of the world? By persistent, remorseless warfare. So, likewise, David once fought the Philistines and set up his kingdom; so, again, Judas Maccabæus conquered the Syrians and

gained a throne; so now the Jews fondly hope that the Messiah will summon them to drive out the procurator and the publican who prey upon God's people, and thus to bring back the glory of the days of Solomon. The tempter whispers, "You are to be the Great Deliverer. Take a lesson from me. Seize the sword, and summon your countrymen: they will follow you gladly, madly. With such a band of Gideon, you can destroy the Roman army, and rouse all subject peoples to revolt, and seat yourself triumphantly on the imperial throne. And with Rome as your capital and Jerusalem as your sacred city, you can spread the worship of Jehovah from the Euphrates to the pillars of Hercules." But they that take the sword shall perish by the sword; and a kingdom based on hatred, and gained by strife and bloodshed is devilish, not divine. "It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve. Get thee hence, Satan."

The tempter, unmasked and powerless, has nothing more to offer. There remains for Jesus only one way in which to win His crown,—the way of the cross. Patiently, bravely, persistently and against constant opposition He must teach the truths that are the eternal principles of the divine Kingdom, and seek acceptance for them and for Himself. If the rulers reject Him, He must turn to the people; and if they refuse to listen, He must instruct a little band of disciples. And ever the

insolence and the ignorance and the selfishness of those with whom He labours will make the burden lie more heavily upon His soul until at last He will die with the cry, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken Me!" It is the bitter path to Calvary, but it is the only road by which to ascend the throne.

"When the devil had completed every temptation, he departed from Him for a season," a very brief season. Just as soon as Jesus began His public ministry, the temptations were presented again. When He offered Himself to the priests and rulers, their constant question was "What sign showest Thou?" When He proclaimed His gospel to the people, they cared little for His message, but clamoured for miracles of healing and for bread. And when He turned to the work of training the Twelve, their thoughts were full of an earthly kingdom, and they jealously watched for any hint as to which of their number would be given the highest place in it. What He had reviewed in thought when alone in the wilderness, He encountered in action when He went forth on His mission. But He had fought the tempter in advance, and could not be taken by surprise nor swerved from His course. "The prince of the world cometh: and he hath nothing in me: but that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do."

This study of the struggle in the Wilderness makes clear why Jesus, apparently more than once, told His disciples about it. He wished them to realize that the temptations of His public ministry were not something unexpected and for which He was unprepared, but had been foreseen and rejected at the outset; and the course He was following was not forced upon Him or shaped by circumstances, but was deliberately planned. Also, perhaps we can understand,—what sometimes seems very puzzling—how a sinless being can be tempted. Our usual definition of temptation is stated by St. James,—"Every man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lust and enticed." And we imagine that if there is no evil desire within us, there can be no real temptation from without. But suppose there be placed before us a choice between that which is good and that which is better; then with no lust for evil things, the temptation may be actual and strong to take the good and refuse the better. So it was with Jesus. The suggestion of Satan was that He should win men by offering them, not that which is evil but that which is not the best. To feed the hungry, to give a sign to the doubting, to lead a subject nation in a struggle for deliverance, were in themselves not wrong; and they would bring Him surely and quickly the following and allegiance that He craved. Therein lay the power of

the temptation to use these means; and the greater His desire to win men to the Father, the keener was its appeal. The very love that led Him to the cross made it hard for Him to turn away from the path pointed out by Satan; and so "He suffered, being tempted."

The writer to the Hebrews says, "We have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin," that is, without the sinful desires which lurk in all human hearts. In every temptation we can look to Him for help; but only in those that are like His,—those that come when in His name we seek to carry forward His work and extend His Kingdom, can we have, not only His help but His sympathy. The three temptations of the Wilderness come to us, as to Him, when we undertake to win men for the Kingdom of God. There is the Bread temptation,—to draw men to God by pointing out how godliness may be profitable in dollars and reputation, or by making social reform the great end of Christian work, with the belief that what men chiefly need in order to be good are comfortable lodgings and abundant wages and frequent holidays and innocent amusements,—forgetting that man shall not live by bread alone. Godliness does sometimes bring earthly rewards, and the care of men's bodies and minds is not to

be neglected, and converts in gratifying numbers can be made through such appeals: but what about their quality and stedfastness? Then there is the Temple temptation, to proclaim ourselves the favourites of heaven to emphasize revelations and the supernatural, to glorify God by first glorifying ourselves. It was in this way that Joseph Smith built up the Mormon church; and more honest men have not always shunned similar methods. But again, what of the quality of such converts and the nature of their faith? Keenest of all to-day is the Mountain temptation; to use in our work the methods of the world; to draw men to God by making religion easy, attractive, popular; to fashion the church after the prosperous social club, counting the year's work a success if the treasurer's report shows a balance; and to speak so well of all men that all men shall speak well of us. To this temptation there is but one response, "Get thee hence, Satan. Your words are an abomination; your arguments are lies. There is only one way whereby we can bring men to a saving knowledge of the truth: it is the way our Master trod before us. And though the path be trodden by few, and its end be seeming failure, may God give us grace to follow it."

Thus in our divine mission we must meet temptation as did Our Lord,—meet it in loneliness, meet it in weakness, out in the desert where

wild beasts howl and human help is vain. But the Word of God is our strong weapon, and the sympathy of Christ our constant solace; and angels wait to minister unto us when the victory is won.

## III

## THE MOUNT OF THE TEMPLE

CLOSE to the eastern edge of the high plateau of Judea, though separated from it by the Mount of Olives, stands a natural fortress,—a great spur of rock pushing out southward and surrounded on three sides by a ditchlike valley which sinks at one point to five hundred feet below the crest of the rock. A smaller valley divides the spur into two sections, of which the eastern, though somewhat lower, is the more inaccessible and, therefore, the more easily defended. Here, even in prehistoric times, the search for safety from enemies brought men to build their homes and rear their altars. Here may have been the abode of Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of God Most High, who received tithes from Abraham and gave a blessing in return. Here certainly was the stronghold from which the Jebusites looked down in derision upon the forces of David, until Joab found a way to climb the cliffs and force them to surrender, winning thereby for himself appointment as chief and captain of the host, and for his king a capital which through all the later centuries would be known as the City of David. And when, a short

JERUSALEM

A mosque stands now on the temple site, but Jerusalem still thrills us as "the City of the Great King"

time after, the ark was brought here and set in its place in the tent that David had pitched for it, Jerusalem became not only the political but also the religious center of the Jews.

On this Mount, after David slept with his fathers, Solomon built a temple for Jehovah, the splendour of which was rivalled by that only of the palace he built for himself. Five hundred years later Zerubbabel and the exiles set free by Cyrus built a second temple on the same foundations, laying its first stones with songs of thanksgiving by the priests and shouts of joy by the people, strangely mingled with the tears and wailing of old men who remembered the first temple and contrasted its glory with the poverty-stricken prospects of its successor. Again five hundred years, and when Mary at Nazareth was but a babe, Herod built the third temple, still keeping to the old foundation lines but carrying the walls up a hundred and fifty feet. He built it of marble, and covered the front, which faced the east, with plates of gold. When the morning sun shone on it from above Mount Olivet, it must have seemed like a mountain of snow veiled by a curtain of fire upon which a thin waving line of black altar smoke stood out distinctly. The sacred house was enclosed by a series of courts with walls and chambers and porticoes and gates, sanctuary within sanctuary, still under construction in the days of Jesus, and not completed until almost the year

when both temple and city perished in the mad revolt against Rome. The temple of Herod was one of the seven wonders of the world. Travellers of alien faiths counted a long journey well repaid when they were admitted into the Court of the Gentiles, and could gaze upon the scene before them. And Jews in foreign lands reckoned their lives a disappointment unless once, at least, they were able to ascend the Holy Hill, and worship within the sacred gates.

When Jesus came forth from His battle in the Wilderness, He had determined upon the first measure of His public ministry; He would appeal for recognition to the Jewish rulers. One duty of the Sanhedrin was to pass judgment upon Messianic claims:—He would present Himself openly before its members for their acceptance or rejection. The place for this, most fitting and already indicated by prophecy, was the temple; and the time most opportune was the Passover, when worshippers from every land crowded its courts for the feast. Meanwhile, since the Passover was several weeks away, He would return to Nazareth. On His way thither He came to the ford of the Jordan where John was baptizing; and naturally He tarried there a little to learn what changes had been wrought in the work of His kinsman by the sacred revelation they two had received. John still was preaching repentance and the Kingdom of God; and now he had a new message, "The

Messiah whom ye seek is already in your midst, though ye know Him not." As he caught sight of Jesus coming toward the circle of his hearers he eagerly pointed Him out to them: "This is He of whom I spake: Behold the Lamb of God." Whereupon Jesus at once withdrew, not wishing to encounter the idle curiosity or rouse the ignorant excitement of the crowd.

The next day, we have reason to believe, was Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, on which Jesus would not pursue His journey, and none would come to be baptized by John; so the Baptist had with him only two of his followers, the boy John and Andrew, when again he caught sight of Jesus and pointed Him out. The two hastened to follow and speak with Him; and then, after finding and bringing their brothers, James and Simon whom Jesus called Peter, they spent the day at His abode. Andrew and Peter, we may suppose, told Him of their fellow-townsman, Philip of Bethsaida; and on the morrow, before starting for Nazareth, Jesus sought him out and said, "Follow Me." Philip in turn must find his friend, Nathanael, and bring him to Jesus. Thus quickly and naturally six disciples were gathered. It is the first illustration of how rapidly the followers of Jesus increase when each man who has found Him will not rest content until he has sought and brought a friend or, if that is impossible, has prayed the Master to find him.

When these six disciples thus accepted Jesus as the Messiah, what did they know about His nature and mission? Simply what the Baptist had told them, and what their own imperfect understanding of the Scriptures had disclosed. Much of what they believed Him to be was erroneous, and much of what they expected Him to do was doomed to disappointment. They felt the charm of Jesus, they recognized the authority with which He spoke, they marvelled at His knowledge of themselves, and they loved Him increasingly; but their creed concerning Him was scarcely more than an enthusiastic Eureka. They were in the kindergarten stage of Christian knowledge, and needed long and patient tuition before they could be graduated as leaders of the church.

The first lesson was at Cana of Galilee. Here the Six were taught the difference between the Baptist and the Messiah. John had called them into the loneliness of the desert; Jesus led them back to the life of the town. John came neither eating nor drinking and preached asceticism; Jesus made them guests with Himself at a wedding feast. John did no miracle; Jesus now quietly, almost incidentally, wrought a very remarkable one. How surprising and instructive each of these acts must have been to men who had been taught by John that the Messiah would be in spirit and deed like himself, only vastly greater! The wedding at Cana was for Jesus a manifesta-

tion of His glory, and for the disciples the first forward step in their knowledge of the real nature of His kingdom.

And how about Mary? When her Son arrived with these six disciples, who doubtless told her that the Baptist had declared Him to be the Messiah, her heart must have leaped with joy. At last the hour she had dreamed of through the years had come; and she eagerly waited for Jesus to reveal Himself as the Promised One to the assembled guests. The failure of the wine seemed a divinely arranged opportunity for Him to do this by working such a miracle as she and the others imagined the Messiah would work; and she confidently took Him aside to propose that He do it. Unwittingly she was placing before Him one of the temptations of the Wilderness; and His response was not so much to her as to the tempter. It was not unkind nor even discourteous; but it had something of the sternness that was in His rebuke to Peter when Satan used him, also, as his mouthpiece. It was a declaration that she must let Him fulfil His Messianic mission in His own way and His own time. Hitherto her slightest expression of a wish had been for Him as a command: this could be so no longer. They had walked and worked in loving companionship for many years: henceforth the path He must tread could not be hers,—He must go forward in it alone. It was hard for Jesus to say this to His mother, and hard

for her to hear it. Few hours are more trying, both to child and to parent, than when such independence of thought and action has to be asserted and recognized. The more harmoniously the two lives have been united, the more agonizingly the inevitable wrench of separation will be felt. But the same love that formed the union will furnish strength and resignation for the separation: it did with Mary. Her word to the servants, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it," is her surrender of authority to Jesus,—her recognition that henceforth He is to be no longer her son but her Messiah.

Nevertheless, the request Mary had made was not prompted wholly by a desire for a show miracle. The lack of wine, caused perhaps by the presence of the six disciples, invited on short notice, would embarrass the host, and cloud the festivities of the remaining days of the wedding celebration; and Mary, who seems to have had some part in the preparation of the feast, might feel this keenly. Jesus came to her relief. Though He would not work a miracle to impress His own claims, He could work one as an act of sympathy, —such, indeed, were most of His miracles. If these six men have caused the wine to run short, let six huge waterpots, filled to the brim, be their contribution to the feast. Is it fanciful to see, not only divine liberality but also something of

quiet humour, in such a solution of Mary's distress?

When the Passover week was at hand, Jesus went up to Jerusalem, taking with Him the disciples. What lay before Him there, He could not foresee; and what course of action He should follow, He had not planned: His Father would reveal it when the hour came. Quietly and reverently the little group entered the great outer court, the Court of the Gentiles. Can we imagine His thoughts as He stood there surveying the scene? To Him the temple with the worship therein conducted was both the strength and the weakness of the Jewish faith. Wherever the Jews were scattered—and there were more by far outside of Palestine than within—it held them together, and made them one nation. Toward it they kneeled as they offered their prayers, to it they sent their gifts from all quarters of the earth, from its glory they nourished their pride when despised by the Gentiles, and in its sacrifices, so they believed, they came closest to God. It was the heart of the Jewish people, into which and out from which flowed the currents of their life. But the priests had monopolized the temple and poisoned those currents. Though the Jewish religion proclaimed One Only God, present and to be worshipped everywhere, the priests said, "In Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship"; and when the Samaritans built a temple to Jehovah upon

Mount Gerizim, they tore it down. Though the prophets taught that His worship should be spiritual, the priests insisted upon the blood of bulls and the fat of rams, and contrived that worshippers should pay the temple vendors a high price for such offerings. Though it was written, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations," the priests, by turning the Court of the Gentiles into a noisy, bustling market, had made worship within that court almost impossible.

Such desecration of the one place a devout Gentile might enter roused a holy wrath in the breast of Jesus. Should the lowing of cattle and the bleating of lambs and the strident cries of money-changers drown the prayers of pilgrims who had come from heathen lands to worship the God of Israel? And should the avarice and extortion of those who ministered as servants of Jehovah depress and embitter the hearts of the faithful? With surprise the disciples saw their quiet Master suddenly rouse to violent action, overturn the tables covered with piles of coin, sharply order the conscience-stricken traders to depart, and with a scourge of cords Himself drive the cattle out through the gates. The worshippers, who thronged the court, were ready to applaud the act of Jesus; but the priests, when they learned what He had done came forth at once from their court to confront Him. Of their words we have but a few, though most significant, and of His re-

plies only one, and this most enigmatic. They must have demanded, as they did on another occasion, by what authority He did these things; and His reply undoubtedly was, "By the authority of My Father." On that later occasion, when they were seeking to trap Him in His talk, He refused to give them a direct answer; but now, when they were simply astonished and enraged, He would meet them squarely. That they dimly understood He was claiming to be the Messiah, is revealed by their demand, "Show us a sign, seeing that thou doest these things." Here, as at Cana, a temptation of the Wilderness was set before Him.

Would the priests have believed, had a sign been given them? I doubt it. They did not at all expect a sign, far less desire one. The fearless act of this young Galilean had for the moment stopped the working of their money-making machine; but His claim to have divine authority for doing so seemed absurd. He could not be even a prophet: "Out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." Their demand for a sign was a sneer rather than an honest request. And His strange reply, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up," only confirmed their opinion that He was a fanatic with unbalanced mind. The simplest course was to dismiss Him with a jest,—"Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou raise it up in three days?" The crowd

would laugh with them at the craziness of this stranger. Even the disciples felt that His zeal had eaten up His discretion. So the priests could afford to leave Him and return to their sacred offices, while the money-changers picked up the scattered coins, and the vendors gained courage to come back with their cattle.

What did Jesus mean by His words about the temple? His conversation with the woman of Samaria, when the conflict with these priests was still fresh in His mind, may help us to an answer. The priests were destroying the temple. They were turning it into a temple of Mammon in which they professed to worship Jehovah but would just as readily worship Jupiter or Venus or any other god who might attract as numerous and costly offerings. Well, let them do with this temple what they please: in a very little time Jesus will rear another temple, a house not made with hands, in which God, who is spirit, will be worshipped in spirit and truth by men of every nation and in every place. And the temple of Herod shall perish in the flames of divine vengeance. The apostle John, who treasured the saying of Jesus, found a further meaning in it as he pondered over it in later years. The temple of which Jesus spake was His body, and His words were a prophecy of His death and resurrection. This does not contradict but rather confirms the other interpretation. The greed and godlessness that turned the temple into

a den of robbers, did bring about the crucifixion of Jesus; and His resurrection from the dead was the great message with which the apostles went forth in His name to rear the temple of which they were foundation stones and He the chief corner.

The Sadducean priests had dismissed the claims of Jesus with a sneer. But they were not the only nor the most influential members of the Sanhedrin. The Pharisees had more weight in that body, and more influence with the people; for they were looked upon as saints because they gave their whole time and thought to the minutest observance of the Law. To them Jesus now turned. They had approved of His action in cleansing the temple, as they would approve of any assault upon their hated opponents, the Sadducees. Would they do more? During the Passover week Jesus must have come constantly in contact with them; for they were to be met daily in the streets and synagogues, since they loved to be seen of men and to receive the applause of the common people whom they professed to despise. And Jesus, too, was moving among the people, and creating some measure of belief by certain miracles,—probably acts of healing,—that He performed. Later on He would arouse the bitter opposition of the Pharisees by His disregard of the laws and observances they deemed so important; but at present there was nothing to cause their disfavour

save that He was from Galilee, untaught by the rabbis and a friend of John the Baptist whose work they condemned. What attitude would they take toward Him? The answer was given by Nicodemus, one of the best of them and a member of the Sanhedrin.

We are disposed to think highly of Nicodemus because later on he protested against judging Jesus unheard, and at the last he came boldly forth as His disciple, and joined with Joseph of Arimathea in giving His body honourable interment. But there is no indication that at the first he deserved our praise. He came to Jesus by night: every time his name is mentioned that fact is rehearsed as something so significant that it should not be forgotten. What moved him to choose the night-time? It could not be fear of the Jews, for there was no reason yet for fear. It could not be the desire for a quiet conversation concerning the things of God, for Jesus never was brusque and enigmatic to any honest seeker after truth. Evidently Nicodemus wished his visit to be secret; and—as His first words, "We know," indicate—he came representing not himself alone but all his party. If we bear in mind the constant strife between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, it may help us to guess his object. This young man, who already had boldly undertaken to purify the temple, might be used in further attacks upon the arrogant claims of the priests; but

any alliance with Him had best for the present be kept secret.

In a way most flattering, yet with something of condescension and patronage, Nicodemus began the conversation: "Rabbi, we know thou art a teacher sent of God, for no man can do these signs that thou doest except God be with him." There is in these words no hint of hailing Jesus as the Messiah, but simply an offer to recognize Him as a rabbi,—a teacher who, though untrained in the schools, has in some way been taught by God, even as the miracles indicate. With good reason Nicodemus expected that Jesus would be greatly pleased by such a recognition. The position of rabbi was the goal of a Jewish lad's ambition: it could be reached only by long years of hard study, and it brought the highest dignity and influence. Yet this leading member of the Sanhedrin was graciously indicating that he and his friends are ready to raise this young, unlettered workingman to such an exalted position. Surely here was inducement enough to make Jesus eager to undertake whatever might be proposed as a return for such promotion.

What Nicodemus had in mind to propose, we never can know; at once Jesus stops him short by declaring that the Pharisees are worthless guides because blind. They claim to know God's will and belong to His Kingdom because they have dedicated their lives to an observance of the Law

so strict as to demand the tithing of even a handful of petty garden herbs: but all such service of God is purely formal, requiring no change of heart: and, no matter how exact they are in it, they remain in darkness concerning things spiritual; for "except a man be born anew, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." Such an unexpected response to his advances is incomprehensible to Nicodemus, and he tries to treat it as an absurd pleasantry by asking, "How can a man be born when he is old?" But Jesus goes on to tell what the new birth is,—something invisible, mysterious, spiritual, through the operation of repentance on the part of man and the Holy Spirit on the part of God. There is an echo of John's message, and a fresh memory of His own baptism in this teaching of Jesus: "We speak that which we know, and bear witness of that which we have seen." To Nicodemus it all is incomprehensible, and he pronounces it so; thereby bringing upon himself the cutting comment, "Art thou the teacher of Israel, and understandest not these things?" And thus dismissed, the proud Pharisee goes out into the night, disappointed, puzzled, indignant, yet bearing in his memory precious seed which one day will spring up and bear fruit, though not till the smart of the planting has ceased.

With the departure of Nicodemus, the attempt to win the rulers ends. Sadducees and Pharisees alike have refused to accept Jesus as the Messiah

or even as a prophet; acceptance necessitates too radical a change in their religious ideas, too costly a sacrifice of their comfortable positions and their cherished supremacy. The Lord of the temple has come to His own, and they that are His own receive Him not. With scorn and ridicule they drive Him forth from His Father's house, and turn again to their old lives which He for the moment has interrupted. The Pharisees stalk the streets in self-complacent holiness: the Sadducees minister at the altar, greedily watching its profits: and Jesus goes forth from the city gate, filled with that sorrow which later on found utterance in the cry, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings, and ye would not!"

## IV

## THE MOUNT OF THE TWELVE

ON an open plain just west of the Lake of Galilee stands a low square hill with two curious knobs and a level space between them,—apparently an extinct volcano whose crater's rim has crumbled away except at the two knobs. The little village of Hattin is close by, and the hill with its two points is called The Horns of Hattin. It is the only height to be seen from the lake in this direction; and so, despite its slight elevation, it might well have been termed "the mountain." Here on a scorching July day in 1187 A. D. the great Saladin fought the Crusaders to a finish, and gave the deathblow to their Kingdom of Jerusalem. And here, tradition says, the Christ whose Kingdom the Crusaders professed to defend, took the first step towards establishing that Kingdom by appointing from among His disciples twelve men who should be apostles. The tradition is so late as to be of little value. The Horns of Hattin may be the Mount of the Twelve; though I confess that as I stood there it did not seem a place Jesus would select,

THE HORNS OF HATTIN

Here, says tradition, Jesus after a night of prayer, chose the Twelve and gave the teachings of His immortal Sermon.

if He wished to spend the night alone in prayer. Luke tells us that He did thus spend the night before He chose His apostles. The great events in His ministry were ever prefaced with prayer, often whole nights of prayer. The evangelist takes special pains to point this out: it impressed him deeply as it should impress us. Too often we use the importance of a coming event as a good excuse for cutting short our prayers instead of increasing them.

To understand why the formation of the apostolate was so important, we must consider the situation that demanded it. When the rulers in Jerusalem had refused to accept Jesus as Messiah, the next possible course was to offer Himself directly to the people. Perhaps they would accept Him even without the endorsement of the Sanhedrin; and if He could win the masses, He might yet win their recognized leaders. This transfer of appeal necessitated a new beginning of His work; and for it the best field was Galilee. In Judea the population outside of Jerusalem was small; and priests and Levites made up a large proportion of it. There was little of agriculture, less of commerce, and nothing of manufacture, to support the common people. Everything centered on the temple. Judea lived then, as it lives now, upon its religious associations; and it traded in them then as now shamelessly. Had it not been for the hosts of pilgrims flocking to the numerous

feasts, the land would have been sparsely inhabited; even so, the region from the Jordan valley almost to the gates of the City of David was a wilderness. In Galilee the conditions were different. Distance diminished the influence of the temple and the oversight of the rulers; probably, too, the thinly-veiled contempt of the Judeans for their less favoured brethren had the same effect. Galilee was a fertile and prosperous land, densely inhabited, busy with commerce and fisheries and agriculture. It was a little country, not much larger than Rhode Island, but it had a population of possibly two millions. And its people were genial, hospitable, polished by intercourse with merchants, soldiers, travellers and scholars from East and West, charitable to the views of others, ready to receive new views themselves. The bigots of Judea offered for the seed that Christ would sow, hearts as hard and barren as the stony hills that made up their land; but the people of Galilee gave better promise of abundant harvest. The soil was rich and easily tilled; the seed would surely grow if the thorns did not choke it.

The first step in the Galilean ministry was to gain the attention of the people. This was done by miracle-working. We shall study the miracles somewhat fully at another time; now it is enough to treat them as trumpet-blasts which drew the people in crowds about the new Prophet. How they thronged Him and pressed Him we can

hardly realize. In these Western lands we are unexcitable by nature and homekeepers by inclination; but in the Orient men regard their homes as temporary stopping-places, and the mere rumour of the supernatural will throw a whole region into frenzy. As soon as Jesus' fame went abroad, the highways of Syria were filled with excited people, hastening to see Him or hoping to be healed by Him (Matt. 4:24). Many of these, having little to draw them back to their homes, remained with Him and constituted a large but fluctuating body of disciples. Whether their presence was a help or a hindrance in His work is a fair question for discussion. But out of that body of disciples sprang the apostolate,—the great human instrument for establishing the Kingdom of God among men.

From the beginning of His Galilean ministry Christ had seen the need of assistants. In Judea He could stand singly before the rulers; but in Galilee it was necessary to multiply Himself in order to meet the multitude. For this reason He must select out of His disciples certain ones who should share His daily life, listen to private explanations of His hard sayings, be patiently trained until they were in mind like Himself, and then with the gift of miraculous power be sent through the land preaching His gospel. This was the first and immediate purpose of the apostolate. But in the background stretched a grander work.

If Galilee like Judea should reject its Messiah, and the cross should terminate the work of Jesus, then these apostles, witnesses of His life and filled with His spirit, could go forth to proclaim His salvation to the ends of the earth.

Accordingly, at the outset Jesus hunted up four of His former disciples, who had returned to their fisherboats when the work in Judea was abandoned; and He gave them a new and special call, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." A little later in like manner He called Matthew. Perhaps the others, too, were given special calls; perhaps they came of their own accord, and showed in their discipleship the material out of which apostles could be made. In all they were twelve men,—a number not too large for the intimate association He wished to have with them, and specially significant as equalling the number of the tribes of Israel. Their appointment to be apostles came not many weeks after the opening of the Galilean ministry, though they were not sent forth for work apart from the Master until that ministry was near its close.

We are tempted to ask, What were the thoughts of Jesus in the lone night of prayer before He chose the apostles; and what were the words He spoke in the early morning when He told them that henceforth they were to be privileged to share His life and work? Instead, it may be more profitable to ask, What manner of men were these

twelve whom Jesus selected to become the foundation stones of His church? It has been said most truly that there is no grander illustration of the power of Christ, no more notable miracle, than the transformation He wrought when, from catchers of fish and collectors of customs, He made these men into apostles. "The marvel is, not that the fishermen of Galilee conquered the world, but that Jesus of Nazareth made them its conquerors. The wonder lies in the making of the men, not in their doings." We fail to realize this because, too often, the apostles seem to us unlike all other men. The halo of saintship, which later ages placed upon them, obscures their features, and makes us see them dimly as great and good and far removed from ourselves. Let us look at them without such disguise as they stand before Jesus.

First, of course, is Peter. He was always first, —impulsive, energetic, acting before he thought and repenting afterwards. If Jesus asked a question, Peter was ready with an answer, wise or otherwise; if Jesus came walking on the water, Peter scrambled over the side of the boat to walk on the water too; if the risen Christ was seen standing on the shore, Peter could wait neither to row the boat to the land nor to put on his coat before he hastened to His side. Peter may have been, as tradition says, the oldest of the Twelve, he certainly was always the foremost of them. Simon was his name; but our Lord, reading his

character, called him Peter, a stone. The appellation fitted him so exactly that it became his customary name; men called him "Stone," just as Thomas Jackson was called Stonewall Jackson, until they almost forgot that he had another name. The best analysis of Peter's character is that which Dr. Hitchcock gives. "He was a man of great natural audacity and force; coarse, homely, rugged, stout, tenacious, powerful, of that class of men, not large, who break down old walls and bring in new ages. And yet a man of variable impulses and changeful moods. Under strong excitement he stood firm as a granite rock. Hence his surname, Peter. But the quick heat might be quickly chilled. And then the granite crumbled: the rock became a sand-heap. His judgment could not always be trusted. His feelings would sometimes snatch the bit and run away with him. His greatest strength was sometimes his greatest weakness. His large, warm heart overmastered him. It was hard for him to be parted from his friends. It was hard for him to go against the wishes and opinions of his associates. Even those with whom he might be casually in contact had undue power over him, not from lack of positive convictions of his own, but because his great, hungry heart craved sympathy and fellowship. He wanted men to think well of him and feel kindly towards him. An overweening love of approbation was his one great weakness. And so he lay, as such men al-

ways do, very much at the mercy of his companions and his circumstances. John's heart was a lodestone that pointed always steadily to the pole. Peter's heart was a lodestone easily disturbed and shaken. Of physical courage he had no lack. In his rough, plebeian mold he was the very incarnation of it. It was boiling in his veins; it was stamped upon his brow; it sounded in his tread. But in moral courage, that immeasurably finer and rarer sort, he was sadly deficient."

Peter's brother was Andrew. He was the man of practical, shrewd, ingenious mind,—the Yankee of the Twelve. Somebody says that Andrew was the man who was always finding things. He, together with John, was the first to find the Christ. When the Baptist said of the mysterious stranger, "Behold the Lamb of God," Andrew conceived the idea of following Him and finding where He abode. Andrew was the first to find another disciple for Jesus, hunting up his brother Simon with the news, "We have found the Messiah." He was the man who found the boy with the five loaves and two fishes, when the afternoon was drawing to a close, and supper began to be an important question. He was the man whom Philip consulted when doubting whether to introduce the Greeks to Jesus; Andrew's advice was likely to be good on any such practical question. A very useful man, Andrew, an excellent man for a church officer.

Then came James and John, the two sons of Zebedee. Apparently their social position was higher than that of the others. They were acquaintances, perhaps kindred, of the high-priest; they seem to have been specially intimate with the prominent family of Bethany; before they followed Jesus they had their own servants; and, later on, their mother was one of the women who ministered unto Him with her substance. Yet it was not their position but their disposition that made them prominent among the Twelve. Boanerges, Sons of Thunder, so Christ called them; passionate, impetuous, full of fire and zeal. We remember they wanted to work a miracle of destruction upon the Samaritan village which refused to receive their Master. We remember they sought seats closest to Christ when He should come into His kingdom, and were sure that they were able to drink of His cup and be baptized with His baptism. Their mother joined with them when they made this request, and they seem to have inherited their natures from her. James was the elder, and for a time the leader of the two; but his fiery nature early found a martyr's grave. John was probably the youngest of the Twelve,—the boy disciple. That fact should be borne in mind in the study of his life. I think it was one reason why Christ showed him such marked affection, making him forever distinguished as the

disciple whom Jesus loved. And the ardour of his own nature, reciprocating that affection, made him pre-eminently the disciple who loved Jesus. Perhaps it was because he came to Christ so young that he grew more Christlike than the rest. We say that the heart of Jesus is to be found in the Gospel of John. Is it not because the heart of John was thus early given to Jesus?

Peter and Andrew, James and John form the great quartette,—the four whose names head each list of the apostles, and whose lives came into closest contact with that of the Master.

First in the second four is Philip. He was a fellow-townsman of Peter and Andrew; and of his first call it is noted that Jesus found him, as if the Lord had been specially looking for him. Perhaps Philip otherwise would not have found Jesus; for he was slow and cautious, a thoughtful man, careful and hesitating, a great contrast to Peter and the Sons of Thunder. We may know his character from the prudent way in which he went to consult Andrew when the Greeks wanted him to introduce them to Jesus. Peter would have rushed them into the Master's presence or driven them away, as the mood happened to be uppermost. Not so Philip; he would first talk it over with Andrew. We can see his turn of mind in the exactness with which he tells Nathanael that they have found the Christ: "We have found him of

whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." There it is, all summed up and logically set forth; Philip has thought the whole through, and is putting it in his usual exact form. But the most amusing illustration of Philip's nature is in connection with the feeding of the five thousand. I fancy I can see a gleam of mirth in the eye of Jesus as he calls Philip to Him and asks, "Whence are we to buy bread that these may eat?" Jesus knows exactly what He is going to do; but He cannot resist the inclination to put just that question to the logical, precise, unimaginative Philip. And Philip takes it in all seriousness, figures out the problem, and answers with his usual exactness, "Two hundred shillings' worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one may take a little." A good man, Philip; a most worthy disciple; but tediously prosaic and matter-of-fact sometimes. I wonder how he felt, after all his mathematical calculation, when he saw Christ break the loaves and spread the feast before the multitude!

The sixth apostle was Bartholomew. Probably he was the same as Nathanael,—Bar means son; so his full name would be Nathanael, the son of Talmai. Identifying him with Nathanael, we have a clear picture of his character in his first meeting with Jesus. He was from Cana of Galilee. Tradi-

tion has it that he was the groom to whose marriage Jesus was invited, though it seems improbable that he would be with John the Baptist only three days before the wedding. His reply to Philip, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?", has often been quoted to prove that Nazareth bore a bad reputation. There is no other proof; and Nathanael's words simply refer to the fact that, as we know from other sources, no prophet was expected to appear in Galilee (John 7:52), and Bethlehem was recognized by Scripture students as the promised birthplace of the Messiah (Matt. 2:5). His question reveals his humility and also his knowledge of the Scriptures. Christ's own words concerning Nathanael, "Behold an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile," are the highest praise He ever gave of any man unless it be John the Baptist. By it we know how pure and transparent the heart of Nathanael must have been, "in whom was no doublemindedness, impure motive, pride or unholy passion; a man of gentle and meditative spirit in whose mind heaven lay reflected like the blue sky in a still lake on a calm summer day." When we think how much of duplicity and ostentation there is in most men, even in Christians, we long to meet Nathanael, the son of Talmai, and refresh ourselves with his transparent truthfulness.

Thomas is an apostle of whom we would know

merely his name, were it not for John's gospel; but three incidents therein recorded place him before us plainly. Thomas was the man who looked on the dark side of life, the perpetual prophet of misfortune. He could not help it: the sunshine was always dim because his eyes were defective. Thomas loved his Master just as warmly as did the others; but he daily expected that disaster was going to overtake Him and them. When Jesus said He was going to Bethany to the grave of Lazarus, Thomas was sure the journey would end in His death; yet he said to the others, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." When Jesus at the Last Supper, speaking of going to prepare them a place in His Father's house, said, "Whither I go, ye know the way," it was Thomas who interrupted, "Lord we know not whither Thou goest; how know we the way?" He would like to know and follow, but the whole matter is discouragingly mysterious to him. And when, after the resurrection, the disciples tell him they have seen the Lord, he is sure they have allowed their fancies to cheat them; the news is too good to be true; he must see for himself, and apply sterner tests before he can believe. His doubt did not spring from unwillingness to believe but from despondency. There are men like Thomas in every church. They are interested in its welfare, ready to work for it; but always they can see

nothing but failure ahead. They are fearful that new converts will not hold out, that new measures are a mistake. They are doubtful, sometimes about their own salvation, sometimes about the sincerity of other Christians. They hesitate and lament and prophecy disaster, and refuse to accept the cheering statements of their brethren, until only our recognition of their constitutional infirmity and of their sincere love keeps us from losing all patience with them. How Peter and Thomas got along together is a problem. I fancy they mutually respected each other, and journeyed apart.

Levi Matthew or Matthew Levi was the publican. That signifies much. While his business was not necessarily dishonest, it was generally followed by rascals and was always odious. Of all the men whom Jesus chose to be apostles, the choice of Matthew must have caused most scandal. We know how it stirs up a modern community when some publican is received into the church; all the Pharisees draw away, and the scribes shake their heads, and Jerusalem is in a hubbub. But Matthew was earnest and honest. He had heard of Jesus; and the moment he was called, he forsook all and followed Him. The old life was abandoned, the new life accepted; and that was all Jesus demanded. He came to call sinners, and Matthew claimed to be nothing other.

Woe to any church so sanctimonious that it cannot receive into its membership the vilest man, the lowest woman, who honestly forsakes sin and wishes to follow Christ! Matthew was a useful disciple. He had learned human nature, and he turned his knowledge to good account. When he wished his fellow publicans to hear Jesus, how did he go to work to bring it about? Send them an invitation to attend the synagogue on a certain morning when Jesus was going to preach? Not at all. Those publicans could not be coaxed nor driven nor dragged into the synagogue; they never came to its services and purposed not to come. Neither would they come to a prayer meeting, if Matthew should arrange for one in his own house. The very mention of a prayer meeting would so scare them that you could not get within speaking distance of them for a month. Ah no! Matthew understood these publicans; he had been one himself. So he made a feast, and invited them to that; and they came,—every publican in Capernaum. And then, when they had eaten a good dinner, and felt generally comfortable and complaisant, and had lost all suspicion of sermon or prayer meeting, Matthew knew that they would listen to Jesus. Matthew is the disciple who knows how to use worldly wisdom in Christ's service.

Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, and Matthew,—these make up the second four of the twelve. The

third four, excepting the last, are little more to us than names. There was James the son of Alphæus, whom Mark calls James the Little to distinguish him from the greater James, the son of Zebedee. There was his brother, Judas (not Iscariot), who seems to have had two other names, Lebbæus and Thaddæus, so that we may call him the three-named disciple. There was Simon the Cananæan, whose name does not mean that he belonged to Canaan but that he was a Zealot. The Zealots formed a Jewish party that hated the Romans with special bitterness, and on one occasion rose in rebellion when a census was being taken for the purpose of assigning taxes. To see Simon among the Twelve would certainly make the Romans suspect that Jesus was planning a revolt. Simon was the tax-hater, even as Matthew was the tax-gatherer; the two men had come from opposite extremes to follow Jesus side by side.

Last of the number in every list is Judas, whose name is always coupled with the term, traitor. The study of his complex character with its possibilities of good, as indicated by the fact that Jesus chose him to be one of the Twelve, and with its increasing abandonment to evil, would require more space than we can here afford. But note the significance of the name, Iscariot. Ish means man, and Kerioth is a little town in Judea (Josh. 15:25); Judas was the man from Kerioth. He

was the only apostle not a Galilean: that in itself would separate him from the rest. And in character and training he doubtless was like the other Judeans: that would separate him still further. Unless by the power of love he could break down these barriers, he never could become one with his brethren. And love seems to have been lacking in his heart. The Messianic expectations that led him to become a disciple were erroneous; but so were those also of the other disciples. Peter and the rest were carried in safety through trying hours of disappointment by love to Jesus and to one another; but Judas did not love. So he fell away more and more until at last he went to his own place, covered with eternal infamy.

Such were the twelve men who constituted the first Christian church, men of familiar types, men of like passions with ourselves. Each had his strong individuality; and the strength of the apostolate lay in their diversity of character. They never lost that diversity; and yet, as the years went by and they became stronger, holier men, they grew more like each other,—all except the traitor who walked apart. Peter grew less impulsive, and James less fiery; Thomas lost something of his doubt, and Philip somewhat of his phlegm. It was because Christ was making them all more like Himself. It is the same change that His loving companionship works in those who fol-

low Him to-day. Diverse, widely diverse, as we are by nature, we grow more like each other as we all grow more like Christ. Self disappears, and we are no longer Peter or James or Andrew, but we are apostles of the Lord.

## V

## THE MOUNT OF THE SERMON

THE main work of Jesus in the Galilean ministry was public preaching and teaching. Mark begins his account of it, "Now, after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God"; and he says that on one occasion—and there were many like it—Jesus "saw a great multitude of people, and He had compassion on them because they were as sheep not having a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things." In the synagogues and in private houses, on the seashore and on the mountainside, wherever the people crowded to see and hear Him, He told them the good tidings of the Kingdom. John the Baptist was a voice crying in the wilderness; Jesus was the Great Teacher holding forth in the crowded market-place.

Suppose that we had been among the audience who listened as He spoke to one of those Galilean throngs, what would we have noticed both in Him and in His words that would force us to declare, "Never man spake like this man"?

First, perhaps, the bearing of the Speaker. He is a young man, and gray-haired listeners with critical ears stand in the foremost row around

Him. He is the son of a carpenter in an insignificant village, and here are rulers of synagogues and Roman officers and members of the Sanhedrin. He has attended no school beyond the humble one in Nazareth, but now He must address rabbis who have studied for years at Jerusalem. Nevertheless He shows no sign of embarrassment or self-distrust or desire to win approval. On the other hand, there is no trace of self-conceit or arrogance. Just at this moment He is the foremost figure in Galilee. The people are thronging to Him; the scholars are discussing Him; King Herod is desirous to see Him. Yet Jesus in His bearing is as free from haughtiness as from servility. He is not indifferent to the opinions of men: His preaching thrills us with its earnest entreaty that they should believe Him and follow Him. But when He is treated with contempt and hatred, His sorrow is not for Himself but for those who reject His invitation and His message. What men think of Him is a matter of grave concern, solely because it vitally affects them. As He stands thus before them His very bearing proclaims, "I seek not mine own glory, and I receive not honour from men."

When He begins to speak, of whom does He remind us? How shall we describe Him to our friends at home? We can best answer that by asking others what they think of Him. The belief is widespread that He is one of the old

prophets returned to earth again. Which one? Ask your neighbour on the right, and the answer is, "He surely is Elijah. There is a glow of holy anger in His eye when He beholds iniquity, there is a ring of indignation in His voice when He denounces sin, there is a fearlessness in His attitude when enemies confront Him, that make me certain He is Elijah come from heaven to herald the Messiah." Turn to your neighbour on the left, and he says, "It seems to me that He is Jeremiah. Do you note the sadness of His face, the tenderness of His tone, the sympathy He shows towards all suffering and trouble, and the love He has for our nation? This is Jeremiah, the prophet of sorrow." A third speaker interrupts, "Nay, this is the prophet whom Moses foretold God would raise up like unto himself. Is he not indeed a second Moses, mighty in wisdom, leader of the people, one who has seen God face to face?" Such diverse answers, while they indicate the chief impressions that Jesus produced upon His hearers, show how impossible it is to give a complete description of His preaching. In His speech are blended perfectly all the force and feeling and wisdom and charm that other speakers display in varying degrees. He teaches, not as a man but as the Son of man.

One thing about His teaching impresses all,—He speaks with authority and not like the scribes. A scribe, no matter how venerable and learned he

may be, puts forth his own opinion with qualifications and reservations, and seeks to establish it by quoting others who have trodden the dark and difficult path of knowledge before Him. But Jesus calls no man master, and expects His hearers to believe His words simply because He Himself has uttered them. The difference between the two is the difference between "It hath been said by them of old time" and "I say unto you." The scribe is a seeker after truth; Christ is the truth. More than any other quality of His preaching, the note of authority must have attracted and amazed the people. As Arthur Hugh Clough puts it:

"Across the sea, along the shore,
In numbers more and ever more,
From lowly hut and busy town,
The valley through, the mountain down,
What was it ye went forth to see,
Ye silly folk of Galilee?
The reed that in the wind doth shake?
The weed that washes in the lake?
The reeds that waver, the weeds that float?—
'A young man preaching in a boat.

What was it ye went out to hear
By sea and land, from far and near?
A teacher? Rather seek the feet
Of those who sit in Moses' seat.
Go, humbly seek and bow to them,
Far off in great Jerusalem,
From them that in her courts she saw,
Her perfect doctors of the law.
What is it ye came here to note?—
'A young man preaching in a boat.

A prophet? Boys and women weak
Declare, or cease to rave,
Whence is it he hath learned to speak?
Say who his doctrine gave?
A prophet? Prophet wherefore he
Of all in Israel's tribes?
*He teacheth with authority,*
*And not as do the scribes.*"

Mark says that "the common people heard him gladly" (12:37), or we might translate it "the crowd heard Him with a relish." As we listen we cannot wonder, for of all fascinating speakers He is chief. He is a master of style. In short, clear, crisp sentences, which rivet attention and cling to memory, He sets forth His truths. There is nothing scholastic about His statements; the unlettered man or the child can grasp every word. Theology to-day is full of hard terms, but they were not taken from the teachings of Jesus. Paul is responsible for many of them; and Paul was a converted rabbi. Jesus was a man of the people, the common people; and He spoke to them in their own language. Nevertheless those same simple sentences, clearcut and full of light as precious gems, are often beyond our full comprehension. We talk about the obscure passages in the Epistles; even Peter acknowledged that sometimes he found brother Paul "hard to be understood." But the obscurest things in Paul's writings are easy to understand compared with the words of Christ. The difficulties in Paul arise

from incomplete statements, obscure logic, involved thought. The difficulties in Christ's words arise from the marvellous amount of meaning they contain. They are simple but wondrously profound. They are like the clear water of a fathomless mountain lake. You gaze far down into the depths but you cannot see the bottom. There is nothing to hinder except your own weak sight. The waters are like crystal, but they are too deep for your eyes. The world has been studying those simple words of Christ for nearly nineteen centuries, and yet their meaning is not exhausted. Concerning them we are ready to cry with St. Augustine of old, "Marvellous, O God, is the depth of Thy utterances; like a great sea their smiling surface breaks into ripples at the feet of our little ones, but into their unfathomable depths the wisest may gaze with a shudder of amazement and a thrill of love."

Jesus is also the master of illustrations. He finds them everywhere; for this world, made by His Father, is to Him in every part a revelation of that Father. So He does not hesitate to use the humblest, homeliest things to make clear the meaning of His greatest lessons. Where is the preacher to-day who would venture to compare himself to a hen, or would illustrate the need of persistency in prayer by a man who will not get out of bed for fear of waking the babies beside him? Yet Jesus does not hesitate to do it. The

farmer going forth to sow, the housewife sweeping the floor to find a lost bit of silver, the yeast placed in a measure of meal, the fish net, the old wineskin, the patched garment,—such common things are the means by which He makes the truth clear to His hearers. He uses illustrations constantly in His teaching, holding the attention of His audience, as we hold the attention of children, by showing them pictures. Often the illustration is given not in words but in acts, as when He washes His disciples' feet to teach them humility. In fact, as a recent writer puts it, "We can say that the whole active work of Jesus was an exposition of His teaching through His own example."

Most remarkable of all His illustrations are the parables. Germs of parables,—brief sayings that might be developed into full parables,—are found scattered all through His teaching, giving it force and clearness. Such, for example, is His question, "What man is there of you who, if his son shall ask him for a loaf, will give him a stone?" Of the fully developed parables only about thirty have been preserved for us; but in the English language alone the number of volumes written about them mounts up into the hundreds. The prodigal son, the good Samaritan, the sower, the tares, the talents—how beautiful and wonderful these are! Where can you find anything like them? What cunning literary craftsman will un-

dertake to frame companions for them? And on the other hand, of what other man with similar mental gifts,—were such a one anywhere to be found,—could it be said, "Throughout His recorded discourses we never find that He has given free play to His fancy in order merely to please Himself and others or for the sake of showy embellishment. The one aim of Jesus in regard to style and method was to make His meaning plain, and show the importance of His ideas. Therefore, He never used the arts of speech in order to beguile His hearers by too lightly carrying them over the difficulties of His teaching, or smoothing over offensive strictness."

Without dwelling longer on the manner of Jesus' teaching, let us turn to the matter of it. His central theme during the Galilean ministry is the Kingdom of God. The people are full of confused and selfish ideas about it: He must make them understand what it really is before He can offer Himself to them as its King. Satan had suggested the opposite course,—that He first display His kingly power, and then, when men have accepted Him, reveal to them the nature of His Kingdom. Plausible but false! If men choose Him as their King, not knowing what He demands, their allegiance means nothing; and if they place Him upon the throne of their own base desires, they are really worshipping not Him but Satan. But can He make men know and seek the kingdom He longs

to establish? That is the problem of the Galilean ministry. It remains a problem to-day.

On that same mountain where He chose His apostles He placed before the multitude the program of His Kingdom in the address we call the Sermon on the Mount. So Matthew tells us; but Luke says that first He came down with the Twelve, and stood "on a level place" (6:17). We may remove this discrepancy by supposing the level place was that between the two knobs of the Horns of Hattin. Luke differs also from Matthew by assigning portions of the Sermon to other occasions when Jesus addressed a multitude. Probably he is right, and Matthew placed together and arranged the sayings because he recognized that they all bore upon questions such as the hearers on the Mount were asking. Whenever men listened to Him about the Kingdom, they must have asked, What is it? Who will be in it? What are its laws and its life? The Sermon on the Mount is Jesus' answer,—His royal proclamation to the world. In it we have the substance of what He taught the people of Galilee. Deeper lessons were to be given the Twelve,—lessons concerning the cup and the cross; but the time for these was not yet.

He begins the Sermon by stating who are members of the Kingdom or, more exactly, how they may be known. As a man born into the Jewish kingdom is known by the fleshly mark of circum-

cision; so a man, who by the new birth has become a member of the Kingdom of God and shares its blessedness, is known by a spiritual mark, set forth in the Beatitudes,—humility, sorrow over sin, meekness, yearning after righteousness, mercifulness, purity of heart, pacificness, endurance of persecution for righteousness' sake. The passive and the active virtues alike are recognized in these eight Beatitudes: there is a place in the Kingdom for all loyal subjects, both those whose obedience is shown chiefly in bringing their own spirits into harmony with the spirit of Jesus, and those who labour and suffer to make the world what He would have it be. Notice that the marks differ, and the blessedness accompanying each is distinct in form. We might say that the Kingdom of God is here divided into eight provinces, all under one Lord and one law. This unity beneath diversity is not always recognized; and the result is jealousy or strife between the different subjects. Those who mourn over sin distrust the beatific visions of the pure in heart; and those who rejoice in persecution denounce the peacemakers as traitors. We are reminded of the feeling between the Thirteen States when first they were joined in lasting union. It seems strange to-day to read how Virginia doubted the loyalty of New York, and Massachusetts thought her interests clashed with those of the Carolinas. It will seem more strange some day to read of the present jealousies and dissen-

sion between the different provinces of the Kingdom of God.

Knowing who the subjects of the Kingdom are, we next are told what they are to do. Briefly, they are to save their fellow-men. Sin works corruption: "Ye are the salt of the earth" to check it. Evil covers the world like a black cloud: "Ye are the light of the world" to dispel it. Nothing is said about entering the Kingdom to save oneself. That result is brought about, but almost incidentally; it is not the chief thing to be sought. The sailor on a merchant vessel is carried from New York to Calcutta; but the reason why he shipped was not that he might be transported to the antipodes but that he might help bring the precious cargo thither. The Christian does gain eternal life; but it is given him that he may become a well-spring of life to others. Salt that is tasteless might as well be white sand; and a candle not burning is as useful under a bushel as on a stand.

Now concerning the law of the new Kingdom, —for every kingdom must have a law—what relation does it bear to the law given by Moses? There must have been among Christ's hearers, not only men who magnified the Mosaic law and opposed the least change in it, but also men who were groaning under its exactions and looking for the day when the prophet, whom Moses had foretold, should appear and abolish it. Christ's declaration

disappointed both. To the one He said, "The righteousness of My Kingdom must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees"; to the other, "Not one jot or tittle of the law is to pass away." The old law could not be abolished, for it is a declaration of the will of God; and the will of God, being eternal, is changeless. Nevertheless in all of God's handiwork there is the contrast between the outward manifestation which is fleeting, and the inner reality which is permanent. The form changes, the substance persists. The ceremonial law is lifted from the Jerusalem which is in Judea to the Jerusalem which is above; and the moral law is heard no longer in the thunders of Sinai but in the gentle voice of the Great Teacher.

The Mosaic law is not to pass away but to be fulfilled. And what is fulfilment? The Pharisees said, "It is literal and strict obedience to every command, even the smallest." And they toiled unceasingly in this dreary bondage. Jesus said, "It is filling full,—bring forth all that lies hidden in the law, as the great and stately oak is brought forth from the acorn." Development is fulfilment. The law of Moses seemed as hard and lifeless as the granite on which it was written. The scribes guarded it jealously, and stored it in a coffer made out of traditions, and gave more thought and honour to the coffer then to its contents. Jesus treated this same law as a living seed, and planting it within the heart made it spring up into the

beautiful flower of Christian obligation. I need not point out the way in which He took its various commands, and showed how they are to be transformed into laws for His Kingdom through the vital force of love which is hid within them. The law has not passed away; it has grown vastly greater and more difficult, since obedience is no longer of outward form but of inward spirit. Keeping the commands of Moses is child's play compared with keeping the commands of Jesus. He set the standard in a single sentence, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." In contrast with this the "Thou Shalt" and "Thou shalt not" of the Decalogue are petty precepts. We listen and cry, "Who is sufficient for these things?"

While the multitude were still filled with amazement at this new Law-giver who, with a superiority that was either the level of divinity or the height of conceit, prefaced each command with, "Ye have heard that it was said, but I say unto you," Jesus began next to speak of the daily life in His Kingdom. Religious duties,—almsgiving, prayer, fasting,—will not be abolished; but their value will depend wholly upon the spirit in which they are performed. They are matters first and mainly between ourselves and God; and desire for man's approval must not be allowed to influence them. The charity that trumpets forth its gift; the prayer that by length and loudness calls at-

tention to our intercourse with heaven; the fasting that stalks the streets with dismal countenance and unkempt hair,—these are not intended for God: they are endeavours in the guise of religion to win favour and fame from men. True, Jesus told us to let our light shine; but it is one thing to be seen to do good, and quite another to do good to be seen. A reputation for saintliness is profitable in certain earthly ways, and the man who is pious that he may gain glory of men, verily he has his reward. Let him rest satisfied with it, and not fancy that also he gains favour with God. We can lay up treasure on earth or in heaven; we cannot do both. We can serve God with our whole heart, or we can just as heartily serve mammon; but if we think to be faithful to both, we are attempting the impossible.

So, too, in our daily toil—for the subjects of Christ's Kingdom are to bear their part in the world's work: life is not to be all almsgiving without money getting, all entering into the closet without entering into the workshop, all Fastdays with no Thanksgivings,—in our daily toil there is to be like singleness of mind. Jesus said, "Take no thought for your life." The Revised Version translates it "Be not anxious." A still better and more exact translation is "Be not distracted;"—that is, don't have a mind drawn two ways at once,—thinking of God and thinking also of self. The ravens have no anxiety, they look to God

for food and accept what He sends. The lilies are not distracted; they put forth leaf and bud and blossom with the single purpose of glorifying God with their beauty. But man, in his wonderful mingling of power and weakness, is ever distracted and full of worry,—looking to God for food, yet fancying it all depends upon his own exertions; seeking to do his heavenly Father's will, and at the same time to please himself. No wonder life is hard. If we could take everything into our own hands, and leave God out, life would be simple. If we would commit everything to God, and leave self out, life would be simple. But so long as we cannot do all things ourselves, and will not trust all to God, so long we are doomed to be torn asunder between hope and fear, conscious strength and conscious weakness. Rest in a Father's care. We have our needs, few or many; but He knows them all. There may be evils in the morrow; but He alone controls the morrow. And concerning the evils of to-day, there are just sufficient,—not one too many, not one too few,—for the best good of His children.

Still another great class of duties is those to our fellow-man. Concerning these Jesus lays down three simple but comprehensive rules. First, avoid censoriousness. Judgments are blunderbusses more dangerous to the man who fires them, than to the one at whom he aims. As quaint old Quarles puts it, "He that cleanseth a blot with

blotted fingers, makes only a greater blur." Second, use discrimination; don't feed swine with pearls. There is a fitness of time and place and mood for the holy things we wish to impart. Occasions are not always opportunities. When a man is rushing to catch an express train I wouldn't stop him to bestow a tract on profanity. And third, in all difficult labours among men, remember that the source of strength and wisdom is God. Ask Him, and it shall be given. "Therefore,"—and here, says Luther, Our Lord sums up His instruction concerning our duties to our fellow-man into a little bundle which every man can put into his bosom and easily carry along with him,—"all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them, for this is the law and the prophets."

With this, the Golden Rule, Christ ends the description of His Kingdom. There remain only some solemn words of warning concerning the difficulty of entering into it, and the danger from false guides whose words sound well, but whose works belie them; and finally the two parables of the house upon the rock and the house upon the sand." "And it came to pass when He had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching." Can we wonder at their astonishment? The world has had the Sermon on the Mount before it for eighteen centuries: has it begun to take it as the guide of daily life? The

world admires it. Many a man, assailing the church, declares, "The Sermon on the Mount is all the sermon I care for: the Golden Rule is religion enough for me." But do we ever meet a man who can honestly say, "I follow the Sermon on the Mount; I live up to the Golden Rule"? Ah! that sermon is the ideal and the despair of human living! The more we strive to obey it, the more we recognize our frequent failure, and seek the Master for His forgiveness and help. And yet,—what a world this might be, if only we did fashion it as Christ commanded us. What a world this will be, when the Kingdom of God is fully established, and the Sermon on the Mount is the law of all human life.

## VI

## THE MOUNT OF THE MIRACLE

JOHN the Baptist is seldom given the prominence he deserves: he is lost in the glory of his cousin, the Nazarene. Had he stood further away,—among the Old Testament prophets to whom he belongs,—we might have gazed upon him long and admiringly; but now, after a hasty glance, we turn to behold the Lamb of God whom he pointed out. Who stops to look at the herald when the king is at hand?

A study of John's course reveals how at every step he was the forerunner of the Messiah. The beginning of his life forms a date for the beginning of the life of Jesus (Luke 1:26). His voice in the Wilderness summons Jesus from the workshop at Nazareth to receive John's baptism and that of the Holy Ghost. He points out the Messiah to his disciples, and they are the first to acknowledge and follow Him. His imprisonment is the signal to begin the Galilean ministry, which opens with his own great message, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." And his death, a few months later, is recognized by Jesus to foreshadow His own: "Elijah is come already,

and they knew him not, but did unto him whatsoever they would; even so shall the Son of man also suffer of them." As the wicked husbandmen have slain the servant, so they will slay the Son; and the work in Galilee must be brought to a close, that in the time remaining before His death, Jesus may have leisure and quiet for training the Twelve.

It is hard to realize how crowded the Galilean days were, and, in particular, how unceasing was the demand for miracles. Fortunately we have the record of one twenty-four hours, from which we can infer what the others must have been. Jesus is in Capernaum on the Sabbath; and, like all devout Jews, goes to the synagogue for the morning service. After the Scriptures are read, He is invited to speak to the people. His address makes a deep impression, though more by the authority with which He speaks than by what He says. A demoniac interrupts Him with wild cries and breaks up the service, whereupon He casts out the unclean spirit and all are amazed. Then He goes to the house of Peter; where, finding his mother-in-law sick with a fever, He heals her. The fame of these deeds spreads through the city; and as soon as sunset removes the Sabbath restrictions, the house is surrounded by an eager crowd who have brought their sick and demonized for healing. He heals many. The next morning, rising long before daybreak, He goes out into a

THE SEA OF GALILEE

The waters and shores of this beautiful lake are eloquent of miracles and parables, making them dear to every Christian heart.

lonely place to pray. Sunrise finds a fresh throng at Peter's door waiting for the Great Physician. The disciples search Him out, and tell Him of this; but He, not wishing to have His ministry turned into a mere exercise of miraculous power, refuses to return to the city, and goes on with them to the next town. Thus the work continues day after day in repeated circuits of Galilee.

Some writers refuse to accept the gospel record of Jesus' miracles, dismissing them as a later invention; but then there is a little left to be accepted, for miracles are inextricably woven into the whole account of His public ministry. Other writers reject all but His acts of healing, and explain these as wrought by an unusual yet purely natural power of the mind upon the body; but again the record has to be revised and sadly mutilated to support this position. Those who were eyewitnesses of what Jesus did, and have preserved the account for us, had no doubt that He wrought real miracles. And for those who accept the Christian idea of God, and find in the character and teachings and influence of Jesus sufficient proof that He was the Son of God, the miracles are not a stumbling-block,—they are an harmonious part of His whole supernatural life and work. There was need that He should work miracles, and He had both the ability and the desire to work them. Like His words they were a revelation of the love and sympathy of His Father,

and a proclamation of the nature of His Kingdom. A miracle wrought for selfish ends or merely to display His power, would be in direct contradiction to what He was teaching; but He wrought none such. As Principal Fairbairn says, "The motives that moved Him to speak, moved Him also to action; compassion in each case ruled His will. The men that most profoundly touched His sympathies were the publicans and sinners on the one side, and the diseased and possessed on the other; and as their sorrows drew Him to them, His gracious and quickening sympathy drew them to Him. He had come to be the physician of the sick, to seek and save the lost. It had been said that the days of the Messiah were to be days of health and happiness, and He fulfilled the prophecy. In relieving suffering He was overcoming sin. His acts of healing were victories over the devil. By them He confirmed faith, cast out Satan, conquered evil and created peace by creating one of its most essential conditions. If we interpret His works through His words, we can see how beautifully significant and ideal they were, the symbols of the Messiah and His age coming with hopeful and happy health to sick and wasted humanity."

It is well for us to remember that the miracles, simple and natural though they were to Jesus, cost Him effort and caused exhaustion. The healing of the woman who had the issue of blood shows

this. When she touched the hem of His garment and was made whole, immediately Jesus perceived that virtue had gone out of Him. The miracle was a drain which He felt within Himself. This is not to be wondered at. Christ's work of salvation was wrought by substitution; He saved from sickness, as He saved from sin, by suffering in our stead. "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." It was no easy work, this daily task of healing. Often it left Jesus at the close of the day so weary and exhausted that He had to hide away from the throng of needy suppliants, and seek rest and renewed strength in communion with His Father.

Largely as a result of the miracles in Galilee, Jesus' popularity soon became boundless. Before the months were ended, every village and hamlet had heard of Him or been visited by Him. His fame penetrated to the court of Herod the tetrarch; and a report of His doings spread throughout Palestine and all the surrounding region. Men glorified God, saying, "It was never so seen in Israel: a great prophet is risen among us: God hath visited His people." To a superficial observer it must have seemed that all the people were becoming disciples of Jesus, and that His Kingdom would soon be established. We can imagine how Peter and John rejoiced, and how Judas chuckled in selfish satisfaction thinking that, as now he was purser for the Twelve, he soon

would hold the lucrative position of treasurer in the new kingdom.

The Galilean ministry promised much; but like the flaunting leaves of the barren figtree, its promise was delusive. Followers of Jesus were not lacking; they came in crowds, filling the streets when He entered a city, forcing their way into a house when they knew that He was within, following Him like a triumphal procession as He journeyed from village to village, pouring forth in search of Him when He withdraw to a desert place. But their following was not prompted by a desire to hear His words or to learn about His Kingdom; what they craved was either to be healed themselves or to watch with wonder while He healed others and cast out demons. The miracles were, indeed, full of divine meaning; but the beholders failed to grasp it because they treated them simply as marvels. When He turned from working miracles to teaching, their interest at once began to flag; and they interrupted His discourse with foolish questions and comments, or tried to turn Him from teaching by forcing upon His notice more supplicants for healing. The seed He sowed fell upon shallow soil, and His popularity though great was most superficial.

Steadily opposing Jesus and seeking to undermine His influence were the Pharisees. From their headquarters in Jerusalem they watched His work and sent their emissaries to counteract it.

They recognized that His influence with the people would destroy their own, that if they were to be looked upon as saints He must be branded a sinner; so their vigilance never lessened, their slanderous tongues never ceased. In Judea it had been an easy matter for them to overcome Him because in Judea Pharisaism was supreme. In Galilee, where the people were liberal-minded and had less reverence for the Law, this was not so easy. Nevertheless, means were at hand to accomplish their purpose. That He was performing notable miracles could not be denied; they did not attempt to deny it. But they insisted that the character of the miracles must be determined by the character of the man who did them. In this they were perfectly right: Moses himself had prescribed this test (Deut. 13:1 f.). You and I insist upon it still. There is not a decade in the present century in which there does not arise some one who claims to be a special agent of God with supernatural powers. And in passing on his claim, the first thing we look at is his life and teachings. If they are impure and full of falsehood, we are bound to reject him, no matter what miracles he seems to work; for it is impossible that falsehood and impurity should be of God. God cannot deny Himself.

The Pharisees, watching Jesus as He ministered, were convinced that He was a son of Satan. To their minds the proof was strong. They noted

the readiness with which He mingled with publicans, outcasts, harlots, sinners,—people whom all devout men abhorred; the disregard He showed for fasting and washings and tithes and all the minute details of the Law and the traditions according to which man should serve God; the public claim He made of power to forgive sins,—a claim most manifestly blasphemous, since forgiveness belongs to God alone; and chief of all, the way in which He deliberately and persistently did that which it was not lawful to do on the Sabbath day. This last offence was the greatest; because the Sabbath was the special glory of every Jew, and its strict observance was deemed the most acceptable of all offerings to Jehovah.

The miracles of Jesus could not be denied; but if He so evidently was an emissary of Beelzebub, the miracles certainly were wrought through the power of Beelzebub. This was the argument of His enemies—not at all a weak one; and by constant repetition they spread it among the people. Wherever a group gathered about Him, they were in its midst, watching and whispering. The poison they scattered did not at first show its effects. The crowds followed Jesus just as before, and the favour of the listeners seemed undiminished. But curiosity was beginning to be less keen; and demands for healing were not as numerous, since already the chronic cases of disease and the lepers and demonized had largely been brought to Him.

The shallow, selfish desires that had gained Him a following were somewhat satisfied, and underneath the gratitude of those whom He had healed there was a growing fear that they had been placing themselves in contact with the powers of darkness. Evidently when popular thought and feeling were in this state a very sudden change from favour to opposition might arise at any hour.

The crisis and turning point of the Galilean ministry came in connection with the feeding of the five thousand,—a miracle for this reason so important that it is told at length by all four evangelists. The twelve apostles had just returned from their first independent journey, elated with success but worn by their labours. The crowd around them at Capernaum was so great that there was no chance of any respite; and Jesus said unto them, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile." That, I take it, is the great precedent for ministerial vacations; and the man who declares that the apostles did not need a vacation is still ignorant of the difference in nervous wear and tear between preaching the gospel and chopping cordwood. But, as often happens nowadays, the preachers did not get their vacation after all. By the time they reached a desert place at the north end of the Lake the multitude was here also, and Jesus gave the whole day to healing and teaching. When night came on, the apostles, saying one word for the others and two for

themselves, suggested to their Master that He send the people away in search of food and lodging for the night. Instead of this He performed a miracle of a new sort. He took five loaves and two dried fishes, which Andrew had found could be secured from a lad, and with them fed the multitude abundantly. At once there was great excitement. This was especially the sort of miracle these Galileans had been desiring; and any one who could do such things,—not only cure sickness but also provide food,—should be hailed as the promised Messiah. "Jesus shall be our king," they cried. "No more illness, no more work, no more Roman taxes! King Jesus forever!" It looked for the moment as if they would even take Him by force, and make Him claim a throne. The Passover time was at hand, and these men were probably on their way to the feast. With Jesus heading the throng, they could transform the pilgrimage into a triumphal procession, swelling their numbers at every mile and pouring into the Holy City, an irresistible flood. Even the apostles felt the charm of such a program. Jesus had to set Himself against it quickly and sharply. He removed the Twelve from the temptation by forcing them to get into their boat and start most reluctantly for the other side, leaving Him behind. Then He dismissed the multitude; and, when they were slow in departing, He withdrew Himself

from them, suffering no one to follow Him, and went up into the mountain apart to pray.

Can we imagine the thoughts of Jesus during the hours of that night as He communed with His Father? His work in Galilee had been a failure; the shouts of the excited multitude, still ringing in His ears, showed that the Galileans, despite all His teachings, had not grasped the nature of His Kingdom nor felt any spiritual drawing toward Himself. All they wanted was bread and a Bread-king. He had hoped high things of them. If they were loyal, possibly Judea would be won over through their influence and example, and then the Sanhedrin would certainly accept Him; or, if Judea refused, Palestine would be divided religiously, as already it was politically, into two realms; and Galilee would become the center from which His gospel could be sent forth into all the world with the Galileans as its missionaries. Somewhere in that future work among Gentile lands the cross, of course, would await Him. Prophecy and His own spiritual insight declared that it was inevitable. "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth alone; but, if it die, it beareth much fruit." But up to the present hour nothing had indicated which was right,—the Psalmist who foretold that the Messiah's death would be at the hands of the heathen, or Isaiah who declared that His own nation would put Him to death. Now there was no more un-

certainty. And it was useless to labour longer with the Galileans. They would come on the morrow, clamorous for more miracles of the same sort as yesterday, and when He denied them they would have no further use for Him, and would refuse to listen to His teaching. Perhaps even the Twelve might abandon Him, leaving Him as lonely as He was this night. He could bear the loneliness, for His Father was with Him; but that His own loved people should reject Him, should prove false to their high mission as a light to the world, and should bring to a miserable end all the national hopes of the prophets and the promises of God,—this pierced Him to the heart. The billows of the Lake, which were tossing the disciples' boat as they toiled in the darkness, were but an imperfect symbol of the waves and billows that went over His soul. The hour in the Mount was a foretaste of Gethsemane.

I need not rehearse the story of what followed that night of prayer. We remember how the Twelve cried out in terror when their Master came to them walking on the water in the grey mists of early morning; and how, when He had dispelled their fears, Peter was eager to imitate His marvellous feat. The lure of miracles still attracted them. We remember, too, how He greeted the multitude when, hungering still for loaves and fishes, they sought Him out in the synagogue at Capernaum. Never was He so enigmatic and un-

responsive. They talked about manna, such as Moses gave the children of Israel; and He answered, "I am the bread which came down out of heaven." They murmured, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?"; and He said, "The bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world." They strove among themselves saying, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?"; and His response was, "Except ye eat of the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves." They muttered in bitterness, "This is a hard saying, who can hear it?"; and He answered, "Does this cause you to stumble? What then if ye should behold the Son of man ascending where He was before?" And at last, filled with rage because He refused to gratify their desires, and out of patience because they could not understand His strange replies, they threw Him over as no longer usable. "From that time many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him." It was the close of the Galilean ministry. Jesus performed a few more miracles because the sick besought Him that they might touch if it were but the border of His garment: but He made no more attempt to teach the multitude. His work had proved fruitless: let it come to an end. It was not He that ended it, the people themselves had done so.

The Galilean treatment of Jesus has been re-

peated many a time in history. Followers have come to Him, urged by selfish desires, looking for easy bread and butter through profitable piety, fancying that religion is mainly a scheme for making men comfortable, counting the kingdom of heaven to be meat and drink; and they have found—just as the Galileans found—that Jesus of Nazareth will not meet their expectations, that the Father seeketh not such to serve Him, and that the Christ never says, " Follow Me " to those who must be baited along as swine are led. The kingdom of heaven is righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Those who hunger and thirst after these gifts shall be filled; but if a man has no craving for things spiritual, he will find sorry satisfaction in the feast Christ spreads before him. I never knew a person who went into religious work as a money-making matter, be he a preacher looking for a big salary, be he a merchant seeking for trade, be he a professional man desirous of drawing patronage, be he a politician with an eye for votes, be he a beggar anxious to feed on the charities of the church,—I never knew such a man who did not sooner or later give up his professed piety as emphatically a poor paying business. He may flourish on it for a little season, even as the Galileans did; but there comes a day when he finds that he must abandon either his discipleship or his dollars, and he says good-bye to Peter and John and their Master.

Godliness is profitable for all things; but not profitable as the world reckons profit and loss. "Give us this day our daily bread," is a prayer Christ taught His disciples; but before we can use it, we must learn the truth with which He Himself met and overcame the temptation to which the Galileans yielded,—"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

## VII

## THE MOUNT OF THE TRANSFIGURATION

OUTSIDE the borders of the Holy Land, yet visible along the whole course of the Jordan even to the Dead Sea, Mount Hermon towers into the air nearly ten thousand feet, a three-peaked, rugged mass dominating the landscape. Snow lies upon its summit throughout the year, and from its foot gushes forth a great fountain of ice-cold water, one of the principal sources of the Jordan. Beside this fountain in the days of Christ stood a famous sanctuary of the Greek god, Pan; and near by was the city which Philip, son of Herod the Great, built for himself and called Cæsarea in honour of his emperor. From time immemorial a fortress crowned the cliff above the fountain, a stronghold used almost to modern days. It was a purely heathen land, this land of the Hermons. Here once the Psalmist, lonely, homesick and taunted by his neighbours, remembered with tears the far-off house of God and the joyous praises of the multitude keeping holyday. And here Jesus brought His disciples "up into a high mountain apart by themselves, and was transfigured before them." That

MOUNT HERMON

In solitary grandeur it stands among the ruins of the past like a sentinel waiting the dawn of a new and glorious day.

He took them to the snowy top of Hermon is improbable; some lower point of the mass would give the solitude He desired. Here the snow gleaming in the moonlight above would accord with His garments "glistening white"; and the fortress built upon the rock below, would echo the promise made to Peter just a week before, "On this rock will I build my church"; while the song of the Psalmist would be a message of cheer to Himself, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise Him who is the help of my countenance and my God."

The first half of the closing year of Jesus' public ministry was spiritually a season of suffering, and geographically a period of wandering. We find Him and the Twelve now on the borders of Tyre and Sidon, now at the headwaters of the Jordan around Cæsarea Philippi, now across the Sea of Galilee in the regions of Decapolis, now going up to Jerusalem for one of the feasts, now coming to Capernaum again almost in secret. It is difficult to trace the course of these journeyings. Sometimes even His friends do not know where Jesus has hid Himself; and His sudden reappearance takes them by surprise. His restlessness tells of spiritual agitation and suffering. The Son of Mary is like a deer wounded by the huntsman's arrow, that wanders to and fro bearing the fatal shaft in its side and seeking a place to die. The

end is not yet, but it is surely coming. There is a work to be done first; "I must walk today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem." But when the next Passover shall assemble the nation in the sacred city, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world will there be sacrificed.

One of the burdens that Christ has to bear throughout these last months is spiritual loneliness. His human heart craves sympathy, but none can sympathize because none understands. The Twelve remain with Him, held faithful by love, and He tries repeatedly to disclose to them what He is to suffer; but He tries in vain. Though He tells them in plain words that He must be crucified, they listen as to a difficult parable, the interpretation of which may presently be given them. That the cross is a literal instrument of crucifixion and the death an actual giving up the ghost, seem preposterous. They will not entertain the thought for a moment: "Be it far from thee, Lord!" They have seen the winds and waves obey their Master, disease and death flee baffled from His presence; surely it is not in the power of human foes to do Him harm. "No man taketh my life from me"—that much of the divine truth they are beginning to learn; but they are far from grasping the rest, "I lay it down of myself." The Messiah has come to deliver Israel; death would put an end to His work: therefore, death is a thing

incredible, impossible. His words about the cross doubtless mean something mysteriously sad,—so sad that often He walks before them in silence, and they dare not interrupt His reverie; but the nature of His sadness they cannot comprehend. And so, despite their presence and love, He is forced to tread the winepress alone.

Galilee still remained the home of Jesus, and Capernaum His city; nevertheless He was seldom there. Occasional miracles were wrought as the answer of unceasing love to individual cries of need; but they were accompanied with strict injunctions to tell no man. The former tours of preaching from village to village were discontinued. Instead of seeking to draw the people around Him, Jesus seemed desirous to seclude Himself from them. Much of His time was spent away from the scene of His former labours in lands where He could wander without attracting a curious, clamorous crowd at every turn. And even in these lands He took special pains to prevent His presence from being known. This has sometimes been explained as the result of Herod's hostility, or of the increasing boldness of the emissaries from Jerusalem. I see no reason for so regarding it. He sought retirement because He wished to be alone, and not because He feared lest death might overtake Him prematurely. There was little reason for labouring longer among a people to whom His labours were only an encourage-

ment in false Messianic hopes and selfish dreams. The Galilean mission had been shown a failure; to continue it would be a waste of strength. And if the anguish of the cross was soon to come, was there not need of rest and solitude for a little season before He bowed His shoulders to bear it?

More than this, Jesus wished to devote these months in a special way to the apostles. They needed His care. As yet, although they had shared His labours and even been sent forth on a brief independent mission, they had advanced but little beyond the condition in which He found them at the first. They remained faithful when the crowd abandoned Him; but it was love and not knowledge that had kept them at His side. Their thought of the Messiah and His Kingdom was scarcely higher than that of those who would by force make Him their Bread-king. Up to the present hour the constant presence and pressure of the multitude had prevented Him from giving them personal instruction, save as sometimes a parable could be explained or a puzzling question answered in the scanty moments of privacy. If they were to take up His work and carry it forward when He was no longer visibly with them, they must receive special teaching and training. And for this He must take them where He and they could be constantly together without interruption or need of reserve.

The intimate association of Jesus with the

Twelve can be used as a strong argument against any denial of His divinity. His main purpose in taking them away from all others to be alone with Himself was to teach them that He was the Son of God; but unless this teaching were true, would not such familiarity be the surest way of exposing its falsity? There have been men in all ages who claimed to be superhuman; but to maintain the claim they were compelled to throw a veil of secrecy over their ordinary life. We remember how Shakespeare makes Cassius scoff at Caesar's pretensions simply because he knows him so intimately:

> "And this man
> Is now become a god; and Cassius is
> A wretched creature, and must bend his body,
> If Caesar carelessly but nod upon him.
> He had a fever when he was in Spain,
> And when the fit was on him, I did mark
> How he did shake; 'tis true this god did shake:
> Ay, and that tongue of his that bade the Romans
> Mark him and write his speeches in their books,
> Alas! it cried, 'Give me some drink, Titinius,'
> As a sick girl."

No man, says the old French maxim, is a hero to his valet. No man certainly can be thought a god by those who share his ordinary life. Yet Jesus took the Twelve into every part of His daily existence. They shared the feast when He miraculously fed the multitude; they dined with Him upon the broken remnants the following day,

They saw Him when He was full of strength and overflowing with energy, and again when He lay exhausted, buried in the sleep of great fatigue. They talked with Him when He was heavy-hearted and despondent, as well as when He was full of joy and hope. They mingled their voices with His in song; they listened in reverent silence while He prayed; they watched in wonder when He wept. In His company they journeyed along the dusty highways, they sailed the Sea of Galilee, they rested at noontime beneath some shady tree, they sat at night and watched the thickening stars, they went to the banquet in the rich man's home and to the death chamber in the ruler's house, they worshipped in the synagogue and in the temple. Never had men better opportunity to know a man than they had to know Jesus. And what was the result? The more intimately they knew Him, the more fully they adored Him. As Bushnell points out, "The most conspicuous matter in the history of Jesus is that what holds true in all our experience of men is inverted in Him. He grows more sacred, peculiar, wonderful, divine, as acquaintance reveals Him. At first He is only a man, as the senses report Him to be; knowledge, observation, familiarity raise Him into the Godman. And exactly this appears in the history without any token of art, or even apparent consciousness that it does appear,—appears because it is true. Probably no one of the evangelists ever so much as noticed this

remarkable inversion of what holds good respecting men, in the life and character of Jesus. Is this character human, or is it plainly divine? "

We have little account of what Jesus taught the apostles during these precious months of closest association. Perhaps the teaching was not so much in words as in the daily revelation of a life whose every act was shaped in perfect obedience to the Father's will,—a life most evidently human and yet most truly divine. But the fruit of the teaching is shown in the great confession, voiced by Peter, " Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God "; and the delight with which Jesus greeted his words shows the eagerness of His desire that they should truly know Him. The apostles had made a long step forward in the way of spiritual understanding. Earlier than this they had recognized their Master as One sent by God, and in a special sense the Holy One of God (John 6:69); but this was a fuller recognition. Now for the first time they perceived in Him the mysterious union of complete humanity and complete divinity. He was not only the Christ, who according to their expectations might be a human descendant of King David or a messenger from another world; but He was also " the Son of the living God,"—one who stood in a relationship to the Father such as no man or angel could claim. It would not be safe to say that Peter had as yet fully grasped the trinitarian doctrine of Christ's

person, and was declaring that in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. That was to be a teaching of the Holy Ghost after Jesus had gone to the Father. But Peter's present conception of His divinity was one that a Jew, trained in the strictest monotheism, could not have gained through reason unaided; it must have been reached by divine assistance. "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father who is in heaven."

When the disciples thus showed that they were gaining the correct conception of their Messiah, Jesus was encouraged to teach them the nature of His Messianic sacrifice. "From that time began Jesus to show unto His disciples that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up." Had He taught this earlier, it would have hindered them from recognizing that He was the Messiah. Possibly the stumbling-block of a predicted cross would have caused them to abandon Him when the multitude at Capernaum went away. Even now they were poorly prepared to surmount it. From the lips of the very disciple who just before had confessed Him came a cry of consternation and stout refusal, "Mercy on Thee, Lord, this shall never be unto Thee!" Again and again as the days went on He had to repeat the lesson of the Cross to

them; and though they finally learned it by heart, its meaning still remained a mystery. Much of His teaching was buried seed which must lie dormant until the winter of affliction was past, and the warm wind of the Holy Spirit quickened it into growth.

A week after the confession of Christ's divinity by Peter came the Transfiguration. Many have studied this as a unique chapter in Christ's history, supposing it the only time when His inward glory shone through the veil of flesh, or heavenly inhabitants came to visit Him. The supposition is unwarranted. Many a night of Christ's life was spent in prayer where no human watcher was present to note what happened. Very possibly on those nights, too, there was a transfiguration as He prayed; and saints or angels may have talked with Him, or the Father may have spoken to the Son. We know that His prayer at the baptism and in Passion Week received an answer in articulate words; we are told of angelic ministrations at the close of the struggle in the Wilderness and in Gethsemane; and the cowering of the soldiers when He went forth to them from the hour of prayer in the Garden seems to hint that His face then wore a supernal splendour somewhat like that which the disciples saw on the Mount. The transfiguration, therefore, may have been no strange thing to Jesus, however strange it was to

the three who on this one occasion were permitted to behold it.

It has been said that the Mount of Transfiguration was the forerunner of the Garden of Gethsemane. Undoubtedly this is true. The bitterness of the cup which He must drain was much in the mind of Jesus during these last months, and the final struggle of His soul must have been preceded by many a lesser struggle. Here upon the Mount undoubtedly He received strength and cheer through the ministry of the sainted dead and the assurance of the Father. But while the Transfiguration was more than a spectacle prepared for the three disciples, they were taken to behold it because, as Peter recognized, it was good for them to be there. And the voice from out of the cloud was like that later one of which Christ said, " This voice hath not come for my sake but your sakes." They had reached a point in their spiritual education where they were beginning to comprehend that their Master was the Christ of God. If the veil of flesh should be partly lifted, and their eyes be granted a glimpse of the divine glory, then faith would be strengthened by sight. They were staggered by the teaching of the cross. If they should learn from the conversation of Moses and Elijah that heaven itself was looking forward with greatest expectation to that cross, foretold by the Law and the prophets, then though it might still remain a mystery, they would not deem it incon-

sistent with their Lord's divinity. Above all they needed the assurance of God, "This is My beloved Son, hear ye Him," to make them receive with greater eagerness and more perfect trust whatever teachings Jesus might set before them.

It was good for the disciples to be in the Mount. The remembrance of that hour helped them the rest of their lives. Peter makes special mention of it in the epistle written just before his death, as if the heavenly voice had been an inspiration to him through all the intervening years. The only mistake they made,—and Peter's proposition to build three tabernacles reveals it,—was to suppose that it would be good for them to abide in the Mount. Work was waiting for them when they should return to the plain; there were lessons to be learned by toil and suffering; and they were yet to realize that a crucified Christ is a more profitable sight for mortal eyes than a transfigured Christ.

There was another revelation of Himself far different from that on the Mount, yet also helpful to the Twelve, for which Jesus took them up to Jerusalem. He had been there once before since the Passover when His public ministry began, and had roused the rage of the rulers by healing the impotent man at Bethesda on the Sabbath day; but at that time His disciples were not prepared to witness the contest that ensued, so He went alone. Now, for the Feast of Tabernacles, He

took them with Him, waiting, however, until after the crowd of pilgrims had ceased to fill the roads, so that He might go up "not publicly but as it were in secret." Since there were those in Jerusalem who sought His life, He must not advertise His coming. Arriving when the feast was in full progress, He went straight to the temple, the stronghold of His enemies, and began to preach. At once the storm broke. Questions were hurled at Him; threats were uttered; He was denounced as a Samaritan and having a devil; Nicodemus, who spoke in His favour, was scorned; the temple guard was sent to arrest Him but feared to do so; and stones were seized to cast at Him. And through it all, day after day till the feast ended, He stood fearlessly before them and uttered His messages of promise, entreaty, warning, and denunciation.

The conflict at Jerusalem was such as the apostles never before had witnessed; and they trembled constantly for their Master and sometimes for themselves. The rage of His enemies was terrible beyond what they had ever dreamed; and His boldness in defying the rulers, His calmness amid their fury, formed a new revelation. It was good for them to be there even as it had been in the Mount, though now they had not the slightest desire to prolong their stay. His present fearlessness taught them that the previous seclusion had

not been caused by fear; and the memory of these hours would do much to make them bold when in later years they, too, must face howling mobs and bear witness to the truth. Also, now they heard Him assert without reserve and in strongest words His divine Sonship, concerning which He had charged them to say nothing when they came down from the Mount. And from the helplessness of His enemies when seeking to slay Him, they were being taught—though they forgot the lesson when later on they needed it most—that His foes were helpless to slay Him until He should give His consent. Bitter as was the hostility, "no man laid hands on Him because His hour was not yet come."

From the Feast of Tabernacles Jesus returned with the Twelve to Capernaum. It was His farewell visit; for when after a brief stay He departed to begin His ministry in Perea, His work both in Galilee and in its borders was ended, and He returned no more. Farewell to Galilee,—beautiful, favoured, sinful, impenitent Galilee!

In imagination we can see the Saviour standing with His little band on one of the hills that fringe the western shores of the Sea of Tiberias. Below Him lie the blue waters of the harp-shaped lake, so familiar to Him and His followers. In storm and sunshine, in daylight and darkness, Peter and John have rowed upon its bosom or

swept its depths with their nets. The feet of Jesus have trodden its billows; His voice has hushed its tempests into peace. The shores are lined with rich cities and fertile fields, fair orchards and crowded sheepfolds. Here are the synagogues in which Jesus has often preached, the highways along which He has passed many a time. Beneath yonder tree He has rested at noonday; from this spring He has often quenched His thirst; in that house He has found shelter for the night. And miracles! He has wrought them on every side; there is scarcely a family that has not in some way been helped,—scarcely a man or woman who has not seen some wonderful work. Ah! Galilee has been favoured beyond the lot of all other lands, and lies close to the heart of the Christ. But now He is taking His farewell look before He goes to meet the cross. As He gazes there fall from His lips,—uttered not in wrath but in that stern sorrow which is far more terrible than wrath,—these words of condemnation, "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum, shalt thou be exalted unto heaven? thou shalt be brought down unto Hades. For if the mighty works had been done in Sodom which were done in thee, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you that it shall

be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee."

Would you know how these words have been fulfilled? Stand on those same hills today, and look off eastward. The Lake still lies in tranquil beauty; but the scene is one of startling loneliness and desolation. Tiberias, the city into which Christ never entered, holds its place as a miserable and filthy town; a few wretched hovels stand on the probable sight of Magdala; some broken columns buried in the grass make scholars dispute whether this may be the site of proud Capernaum; and as for Bethsaida and Chorazin there is nothing to show that they ever existed. The Land of Gennesaret lies under a curse; but it brought that curse upon itself.

Ah, woe to the land, or the house, or the heart, that drives the Saviour from its midst! Its sentence and doom are those of Chorazin and Capernaum. When Jesus has spoken His truths to it; when He has made His divinity most evident; when He had done all within His power to win it to Himself; and, despite all this, selfishness refuses to listen, and ribaldry mocks at His invitation, and hatred loads Him with abuse,—then reluctantly, sadly but surely He departs. And upon that land, that house, that soul, there comes the awful judgment, framed not by the wrath of God but by His justice, decreed by His wisdom

but against His wish, (for God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance) the judgment summed up in a single sentence, " Without Christ and without hope."

The stern sentence upon Capernaum and her sister cities is not the last word of Jesus in Galilee; and we must not end this chapter as if it were. On Easter morning, when the women stood in trembling and astonishment before the open tomb, an angel bade them, " Go, tell His disciples and Peter, He goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see Him, as He said unto you." So it came to pass that on the shores of the Lake where once He had called Peter from his fishing-boat, He called Him again; and on " the mountain " where He had preached the Sermon, He gave to the Eleven His greatest command and most precious promise, " Go ye and make disciples of all the nations," and " Lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world." Thus, through His love for the land of His childhood, Galilee had a place in the second beginning of His gospel even as in the first.

## VIII

## THE MOUNT OF THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

THE Mount of Olives is associated in more ways with the public ministry of Jesus than any other spot in Palestine. On its eastern slope lay Bethany, the home of His most intimate friends and the scene of His most important miracle; nearer its summit though not far from Bethany He gave His farewell message to the apostles, and was parted from them and taken up into heaven; down on its western side was the Place of the Oilpress to which He often came for prayer, and whose olive trees witnessed His agony and arrest; and along its southern shoulder ran the road from the Jordan and Bethany to Jerusalem by which the excited multitude with palm branches and hosannas escorted Him triumphantly to the gates of the temple. This was the great pilgrim road for worshippers from Galilee, who chose rather to cross the Jordan and journey down its eastern bank and cross again and traverse the hot plain of Jericho and make the stiff climb of twenty miles up through a wilderness frequented by robbers, than to travel more easily and quickly through the land of the hated Samaritans. Jesus

had first walked this road when, a boy of twelve, He came with His parents to the Passover. He had trodden it many a time since then, and made it immortal by His parable of the Good Samaritan. But that which renders it sacred to all who love and revere Him was His journey over it when He came from Bethany to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

In a certain sense the whole of the closing six months of the public ministry may be considered a journey up to Jerusalem and the cross, or a preparation for the triumphal entry and its inevitable results. The course of this journey can with difficulty be traced. Starting from Capernaum, Jesus and the Twelve seem to have passed through the plain of Esdraelon to the borders of Samaria, thence eastward across the Jordan into Perea, and in that land to have journeyed leisurely from village to village. There was no reason for haste: the Passover was months away, and the present work was of great value to the Twelve in training them for their future missionary labours. After the private lessons that Jesus had given them concerning Himself and His Kingdom, they could enter with new understanding into His public ministry. Perea did not equal Galilee in fertility and population, nor Judea in political and religious importance; but it was well peopled and flourishing, and offered for their labours a new field which the hostility of rulers and Pharisees had not yet made barren. And labouring there,

THE ROAD FROM BETHANY

This road around the southern shoulder of the Mount of Olives has been in all ages the main highway from the Jordan to Jerusalem.

moving slowly towards the south, they would be almost in the highway to Jerusalem.

There were miracles in this Perean ministry; we have a full report of two or three; but miracles fall into the background, and teaching comes to the front. Often the teaching was by parables, and it is well to note the character of these. Christ's parables may be arranged in three groups, those told by the Sea of Galilee, those of the Passion Week in Jerusalem, and the intermediate parables of the Perean days. The first group is given to lessons concerning the Kingdom. It has, for example, the parables of the sower, the leaven, the mustard seed. They are plain enough to us who have their key; but to many of the original hearers they must have been enigmatic. Indeed, Jesus used such parables chiefly when part of His audience were enemies waiting to catch Him in talk; so that "hearing they might hear and not understand," and thus be unable to accuse Him of teaching what the Sanhedrin would condemn. The parables in Jerusalem are stern prophetic descriptions of the final judgment or the doom of the Jewish nation; e. g., the ten virgins, the talents, the wicked husbandmen, the two sons. The full meaning of some of these is even yet hidden. They shadow forth truths that cannot be clearly known until the fullness of times is come. But the Perean parables are mostly so simple that no hearer could fail to understand them, and they

are both tender and practical. Few words of Jesus have more deeply touched the world than those about the Good Samaritan, the lost sheep, the prodigal son, Dives and Lazarus, and the Pharisee and the publican. And such declarations of divine mercy and infinite love are filled with double force when we remember that they were spoken as the Master was journeying up to Jerusalem to lay down His life for the world.

We find in the teachings of this period a special emphasis of self-sacrifice. This might be expected. The law of redemptive suffering, whose divine sanction was recognized in His own life most clearly at this time, was the law that Jesus now laid down for all who would be His disciples. "Count the cost," He said; "Whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after Me, cannot be My disciple." It was in Perea that He met the rich young ruler who was unwilling to surrender His wealth; and probably it was in Perea that He warned those who offered to follow Him, that they must become homeless, must abandon family ties, and having put their hands to the plow must not look back. Concerning Christ's words during the Perean ministry Principal Fairbairn well remarks, "The change in His spirit was marked by a corresponding change in His teaching. He became sadder; was in speech, as in soul, more the Man of Sorrows, despised and rejected of men; less the exalted Servant of God coming in beauty over the

mountains and through the valleys to publish peace. The contradiction of sinners was the prophecy of Calvary. The iron had entered into His soul, and His heart was bearing its cross. The springtime was passed; autumn with its falling leaves and withered flowers had come. Cities once zealous were cold; enemies once soft-spoken and fearful were harsh and arrogant. But just when men were falsest and feeblest, He was truest to Himself; His person came into the foreground; He Himself became the great theme of His discourses. He proclaimed Himself to be greater than David or Solomon; as the last and greatest of the prophets, as above the Law, as superior to the Temple, as revealer of God. He declared Himself to be the Bread of Life, the Life of the world, the Light of the world. The impending suffering He glorified; the death that was coming so surely, He interpreted into a sacrifice of universal efficacy and eternal worth. The gathering clouds left His soul clear. His confidence in His cause and triumph seemed to grow in calmness and rise in strength as the storm increased. His spirit had depths storms could not reach, heights they could not disturb."

The proclamation of His nature and claims, concerning which Dr. Fairbairn speaks, was made by Jesus mainly in Jerusalem. During the Galilean ministry He had stayed away from the city; but in this last year He went up to each of the

feasts,—to Pentecost, if that is the unnamed feast of John 5:1; to Tabernacles, to Dedication and finally to the last Passover. The rulers had refused to accept Him, denouncing His teachings and pronouncing His miracles the work of Satan; and He knew that they would proceed against Him until they compassed His death; but they must not do this without full knowledge of what they were doing. With increasing clearness as their hostility increased, He offered Himself to them as the divine Messiah, and forced them to pass judgment upon His claims. We might study His statements at Pentecost when they sought to kill Him because He called God His Father, or at Tabernacles when they were on the point of stoning Him because He said "Before Abraham was I am." But a single scene from the next feast will be enough.

The Feast of Dedication came in the middle of the Perean ministry,—during the month of December. It was a patriotic festival commemorating the expulsion of the Syrians from the temple two hundred years before, and its purification and rededication, rendered necessary by their shameful desecration of it. The feast was one of general rejoicing; and though attendance was not obligatory, many devout Jews were accustomed to go up to the Holy City for it. In accordance with His present plan of showing Himself openly as the Messiah, Jesus suspended His Perean work long

enough to attend the feast. Whether His disciples went with Him we are not told; probably they did, and this is what they saw and heard. Jesus is walking to and fro beneath the covered porch of the Temple, called Solomon's porch, driven there, it may be, with other worshippers, to escape the cold December rain. The rulers recognize Him, and come with the question,—asked with no honest desire to know the truth, but with design to ensnare Him,—"How long dost Thou make us to doubt? If Thou be the Christ, tell us plainly." He does tell them plainly, "I and My Father are one." Let those who seek to deny His divinity explain these words as they please,—let them seek for some unity between Jesus and God that shall not involve more than the unity which any consecrated man may claim with the Father of us all, unity of action or purpose or feeling or will,—one thing is certain, the Jews understood (and Christ knew that they would so understand, and meant them to) His answer to mean that He was God. No sooner has He uttered the words than they take up stones to stone Him; and when He asks why they do this, the reply is, "Because thou, being a man, makest thyself God." It is hard for us to grasp the subtle doctrine of the Trinity; it is impossible for us to comprehend fully its mystery. But he who listens to Christ's words about Himself must end by crying either with the Jews,

"Thou speakest blasphemy," or with Thomas, "My Lord and my God." There is no middle ground.

This plain revelation of Himself at the Feast only brought forth an equally plain revelation of the hatred and murderous purpose of the Jews; and Jesus went back to Perea, certain that the next visit to Jerusalem must be His last. John's record contains a statement which has in it something touchingly human and pathetic: "They sought again to take Him, but He went forth out of their hand; and He went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John was at the first baptizing; and there He abode" (10:39). It does not seem irreverent to explain this act as caused by the same impulse as similar acts in our own lives. When our lifework is almost ended, and we are in the mood for retrospect, we turn instinctively to the place where that lifework began. The man of millions revisits the country store where he laid the foundation of his fortune. The man of world-renowned eloquence recalls the little lyceum where he first won laurels as a debater. The man of God seeks the spot where he gave his heart to God or received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. So Jesus in these last days came back to the place where He had been given His divine commission and had entered obediently upon His public ministry. And abiding there, His thoughts must have been busy with all that had

taken place between that first hour and now. Then John was the mighty preacher of righteousness before whom all Judea trembled; he counted his converts by thousands, and was confident that the day of Israel's Messianic glory was about to dawn. Now John was dead, put to death by the malignity of a wicked woman, his disciples were scattered, and his work was scarcely more than a memory. Then Jesus had just come forth from His mountain home, buoyant with youthful hope and strength, eager to proclaim glad tidings to His nation. Now the possibility of national acceptance was ended; Judea was ready to slay Him, Galilee had lost all interest in Him, Perea was but a brief abiding place until the appointed hour of death should come. The day was almost spent, —the freshness of morning, the heat of noon, the gathering shadows of evening,—soon it would be night. Then, as a preparation for His work, He had sought the baptism of John; now as He looked forward to Calvary, His cry was, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished."

There were still three months before the Passover; and while the daylight lasted, Jesus must work the works of Him who sent Him. John was dead; but his labours as the forerunner still brought forth a little fruit. As Jesus abode in this place where John first baptized, "many resorted unto Him, and said, 'John did no miracle;

but all things that John spake of this man were true; and many believed on Him there.' " While He was thus employed a messenger came in hot haste from Bethany sent by the two sisters with the simple statement, in which they knew He would recognize a prayer for help, " Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick." And Jesus, after sending back an answer whose ambiguity must have sorely tried the suppliants though it did not shake their faith, and after waiting calmly until Lazarus was already dead, went to Bethany. The apostles accompanied Him, though it seemed to them that He was deliberately putting Himself in the power of His enemies.

There is much to be learned by studying the raising of Lazarus; but all we can do now is to look at its relation to subsequent events. Christ's miracles at Jerusalem, as recorded in the Gospel of John, form a climax of increasing manifestations of divine power on His part, and of increasing hostility and rage on the part of the rulers. At the first Passover the miracles seem to have been simple acts of healing; and the rulers treated them and His teaching with little more than contempt. At Pentecost the cure of a man who for thirty-eight years had been publicly known to be a hopeless cripple, accompanied as it was with a seeming violation of the Sabbath and the declaration that He was justified in working on the Sabbath because His Father worked, roused the Phari-

sees to persecute and seek to slay Him. At Dedication, the opening of the eyes of a man born blind,—something unheard of since the world began, so the poor fellow declared,—led to the excommunication of the man as well as to an attempt to stone Jesus. And now this miracle of raising Lazarus, who had lain four days in the tomb, brought about a deliberate decision of the whole Sanhedrin, both Pharisees and Sadducees, that the miracle-worker must be publicly condemned and handed over to the Romans to be put to death.

The struggle between Jesus and the rulers was one in which no compromise was possible; and the bolder and stronger Jesus showed Himself to be, the more aroused and desperate His opponents became. We can well believe that the Sanhedrin debated carefully and long before they reached their final decision. This Galilean was no shallow impostor; He was a very child of hell, armed with the deadliest powers of His Satanic father; but God was on their side, and with His help they might rest assured of victory. So they reasoned, and reasoning prepared to act. That the raising of Lazarus would bring such a result, Jesus had clearly foreseen. The crucifixion was in His thoughts when He said of the message from Bethany, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby." Being glorified and being crucified were almost identical terms for Him in

those days. And we can see now that if Lazarus had not died and been raised from the dead, there would have been no Triumphal Entry on Palm Sunday and no Via Dolorosa on Good Friday.

After the miracle at Bethany Jesus did not return to Perea, but retired to a little, obscure village called Ephraim, probably in the northeastern part of Judea. He went into hiding, not because He feared death but because He desired to eat the Passover with His disciples before He suffered; had the Sanhedrin known where He was, they would have taken Him into custody at once. Moreover, He needed these few weeks of quiet and retirement for giving His apostles their last lessons and for gaining spiritual rest and refreshment before the final days of conflict and anguish.

When the Passover was at hand the good people of Ephraim doubtless took the direct road over the Judean hills to Jerusalem; but Jesus went down across the Jordan valley, and joined the bands of pilgrims who were journeying from Galilee and Perea. He had gone "as it were in secret" to Tabernacles, and had appeared unexpectedly at Dedication; but there should be no such precautions about this visit. Passing through Jericho, where His healing of Bartimæus and abiding with Zacchæus centered the attention of all upon Him, He came up to Bethany on Friday and with the Twelve remained there for the Sabbath, while the other pilgrims pressed forward to Jeru-

salem, bearing the tidings that the wonderful Nazarene was on His way to the feast. The Sanhedrin had commanded that if any man knew where He was he should reveal it, and the worshippers in the temple had been asking each other, "What think ye? That He will not come to the feast?" Now all uncertainty was ended, and friend and foe alike held their breath in expectation.

There was no reason why Jesus should hasten to enter the city, and it seems to have been high noon or later on Sunday before He set forth from Bethany. Nor is there any indication that He planned a triumphal entry; it was forced upon Him by the pilgrims who crowded the road, some journeying up from Jericho, others coming from Jerusalem in search of Him. They greeted Him with the cry, "Hosanna! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel"; they spread branches of palm-trees and even their garments before Him; they formed themselves into a royal escort. Once before when they tried to make Him king, Jesus had turned away from them; this time He suffered them to work their will. But if He was to be brought into the city as a king, there should be no mistake as to what kind of a king. For this purpose He borrowed the ass, a beast always associated with peace as the horse was with war, and let them place Him upon it; and thus, as the prophet had

foretold, "meek and riding upon an ass" He went slowly onward, with the multitude streaming before Him and behind, full of exultant expectation that now the Romans would be driven from their city and their land. How utterly they failed to grasp the significance of the beast on which He rode!

The modern road from Bethany to Jerusalem runs nearly in the track of the ancient one; and, as Dean Stanley points out, we can follow Christ's pathway on that first Palm Sunday more exactly than on any other journey in His life. The triumphal procession wound around the southern shoulder of Mount Olivet until they came to a bend in the road where that corner of the city in which stands Mount Zion appeared in sight. At this view of the City of David, they raised again their cry, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." There were Pharisees among the crowd; and these indignantly said, "Master, rebuke thy disciples." But Christ answered, "If these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." The greeting which the people were giving Him belonged to Him by right; He would not refuse to accept it.

The road next descended into a hollow hiding Mount Zion; then, rising again and bending to the north around the hill, it brought the whole city in view. Across the valley of Kedron the

gray wall rose in massive line, the roofs and towers and palaces shone out in the sunlight, and the snowy temple, glittering with gold and surrounded by courts filled with worshippers, seemed like a heavenly house of God. Involuntarily the procession paused to gaze. For the multitude the sight was the most beautiful that earth could offer; for Jesus it was the most saddening. He saw, as only He could see, the doom already overhanging Jerusalem. The day was close at hand when its walls would be battered down, its temple polluted, forsaken, blackened by fire, and its houses a mass of ruins filled with rotting corpses. The contrast touched Him to the heart; and tears filled His eyes as He cried, "If thou hadst known in this day, even thou, the things which belong unto peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, when thine enemies shall cast up a bank about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall dash thee to the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." Sadder lament was never uttered for any city, and no city ever had more cause for it. But the multitude listened uncomprehending, and raised again the cry, "Hosanna! Blessed is the King of Israel!"

Down across the valley of the Kedron, and up the short, sharp ascent to the city gate the noisy

procession moved, and at their coming the whole city was stirred. The walls and housetops were crowded with spectators; and the streets were so filled with the shouting multitude that the Pharisees said one to another, "Lo, the world is gone after Him!" Onward they pressed into the great Court of the Gentiles, and then they waited to see what would happen. Would the priests dare now to defy Him? Would the Roman guards come forth to arrest Him? Would there be the miracle they were confidently expecting,—fire from heaven to destroy His enemies,—earthquake or thunder to strike terror to all hearts? They had hailed Him as king and were ready with their lives to support Him; they had brought Him to the place of all places where He should assert His claims to the throne: what would He do? Breathless they waited. And to their disappointment, rage, disgust, He did—nothing. The priests stood in silence; the Romans made no stir; and Jesus moved through the temple courts, surveying all with that comprehensive look of His, silently and humbly as a common worshipper. Only a word from Him, a sign even, and the conflict would be precipitated. But His lips were sealed, His hand made no motion towards the crown. Sullenly they waited, vainly they watched. And presently, as the day was drawing towards its close, they saw Him quietly go forth across the valley, up the slope of Olivet, back once more towards Bethany.

The Triumphal Entry seemed an utter failure: they had spent their strength upon one who failed them. Now in their rage they were ripening for Friday and Calvary.

And Jesus,—can we imagine the thoughts that filled His heart, as He retraced the way along which He had so recently come in mighty company, but now must go with only the little band of disciples,—and they, too, sorely disappointed? It had been an hour of temptation, equalled in intensity by only the temptation in the Wilderness; did the angels come and minister to Him at its close now as they did then?

## IX

## THE MOUNT OF THE AGONY

ON the lowest slope of Mount Olivet, above the dry ravine in which once flowed the brook Kidron, and close by the point where the main road to Bethany makes a turn to the south after crossing the valley, stands a group of olive trees, eight in all. A modern wall, high, plastered and whitewashed, shuts them in; and the enclosed space, under the care of Latin monks, has been transformed into a stiff garden with gravel walks, trimmed hedges, flower beds, and numerous shrines. This is the traditional site of Gethsemane. You pay a fee for admission; and the custodian who shows you through, keeps careful watch against your carrying away a flower or leaf or pebble as a souvenir. He is ready, however, to supply such articles to any extent for due remuneration. Near by, various places of special sanctity are pointed out, a dark cave where Jesus prayed, a stony bank where the three disciples slept, and the *terra damnata,* where Judas gave the kiss of betrayal. You look at all sceptically, fling some coppers to the clamorous beggars who waylay you, and make your way to another tradi-

THE MOUNT OF OLIVES

In the foreground is the Garden of Gethsemane, and beyond it is the footpath leading across the summit to Bethany.

tional site of Gethsemane, appropriated and advertised by a rival denomination.

Nevertheless, though superstition and greed have done all in their power to destroy the impressiveness of the place, they have not wholly succeeded. Those old olive trees,—now scarcely more than great, shapeless boles, crowned with broken branches,—are eloquent with voices that reach the soul. Granted that they cannot be as old as the time of Christ, granted that Gethsemane must have been further away from the public road, yet the spot was somewhere near this, and in the shadow of like trees our Saviour knelt in prayer. It was fit that the sanctuary of sorrows should be woven of olive branches. The olive is sacred among the trees of the field. The cedar of Lebanon, tall, stately, ever green, tells of power and glory; the olive with ashen foliage and gnarled, distorted limbs and starry blossoms or sable beads of fruit, tells of sorrow, agony, fruit-bearing.

Gethsemane was a place of resort for Jesus before the night of His betrayal. This is shown by the traitor's confidence that he would find Him there. Possibly the reason why Jesus was hungry and sought for figs on the morning after the Triumphal Entry, was because He had spent the whole previous night at Gethsemane. The disciples could find shelter and food in the hospitable home at Bethany; but He, after the heavy strain

of the day, must have solitude and communion with His Father before He could go forth to another day of conflict.

Monday of Passion Week could hardly be called a day of conflict; it was comparatively uneventful. The Jews had not determined what course to pursue because they could not foresee what Jesus would do; and He in turn was waiting some decisive action by them. Everything depended upon the people; and they seemed neutral, already lacking the enthusiasm of the previous day but still so attentive and friendly to Jesus that the rulers dared not proceed against Him. The healing of some lame and blind in the temple aroused no excitement, for the Galilean pilgrims were used to such miracles; yet when the children, remembering the mighty chorus of yesterday, began to cry, "Hosanna to the Son of David," the priests dared do nothing more than remonstrate. When the day drew to an end without any demonstration of popular favour, and Jesus retired again to the Mount of Olives, His friends must have felt increasing disappointment, and His enemies corresponding elation.

On Tuesday the great contest began, and was carried on unceasingly throughout the day. Christ's enemies now were ready to attack Him. Pharisees and Sadducees had put aside mutual hostilities, and arranged for a combined assault. Their endeavour was to discredit Him with the

people, so that popular protection would be withdrawn and they could arrest Him without hindrance. Different agents of the Sanhedrin, one after another, came to Him as He taught in the temple, and by direct demands, by flattery and by seemingly honest enquiries, tried to trap Him into some statement that would justify His arrest or, at least, would completely alienate His hearers. They challenged His authority to teach without permission from the Sanhedrin. They tried to get from Him a decision about paying taxes that either would offend all patriotic Jews or else could be reported to the Romans as insurrectionary. They sought to cover Him with ridicule by asking absurd questions, and to prove Him ignorant of the Law by propounding problems from it. All their keenest wits were used as hostile weapons. It was in vain; each assailant retired discomfited or was forced against his will to endorse His replies. Nor did Jesus simply stand on the defensive. He boldly and without reserve attacked the rulers. He put to them questions that exposed their incompetence to be Israel's teachers. He spoke against them His severest parables of condemnation, the application of which both they and the bystanders could not fail to see. And finally He broke forth into a series of terrible denunciations of the scribes and Pharisees. Even to read the woes He pronounced, appals us today: what must it have been to hear Him utter them to the

cowering rulers while the audience of pilgrims stood silent and horror-stricken. They are a revelation of our Lord, not as the suffering Son of Mary nor as the loving Saviour of the lost, but as the Judge of the world, the One who pronounces sentence with absolute justice upon the righteous and the wicked. In them we hear the voice that hereafter shall proclaim, "Depart from me ye cursed into the eternal fire, which is prepared for the devil and his angels." Christ does not cease to be the Lamb of God; but here He reveals, what we never should forget, that there is such a thing as "the wrath of the Lamb."

When Jesus thus passed sentence upon His enemies, He also fixed their sentence upon Himself. Even the pilgrims who had not lost faith in Him became unwilling to follow One who so ruthlessly denounced the men whom they from childhood had deemed the saintliest and wisest of all Israel. And the rulers themselves were boiling with rage and bloodthirstiness. Jesus had openly and outrageously mocked, insulted and cursed them. The penalty He must pay for this must be nothing less than the most ignominious and cruel fate within their power. When Jesus went forth from the City on Tuesday at nightfall, He knew that to enter it again would be to invite certain death, if His presence there was discovered. And in order that He might eat the Passover with His

disciples before He suffered, He remained in seclusion all of Wednesday and until Thursday evening.

We note with interest that this Passover was the first in which Jesus Himself was the giver of the feast. Before His ministry He would be the guest of some older, more influential person. At the first Passover of His ministry He had not yet chosen all the Twelve, and so would not have the prescribed number for the meal; the second Passover He did not attend. It is true that the room in which He now sat down with His disciples belonged to another. But from the manger to the tomb Jesus had to depend upon the hospitality of His friends: the only property He could call His own was a handful of clothing which the Roman soldiers divided among themselves while He hung upon the cross. It is true, also, that the necessary preparations for the present feast were made by Peter and John. But Jesus, as the head of the company, was responsible for their acts, and was reckoned as the one who really sacrificed the lamb. It was the only Paschal lamb He ever offered; as the symbol of His own sacrifice, the offering was once for all.

The desire with which Christ desired to eat this Passover with His disciples is explained when we consider the importance of His transformation of the Jewish feast into the Christian sacrament of the Lord's Supper. More even than the written

record of His words and miracles, this sacramental meal has kept alive the memory of His life and aided men to understand the meaning of His death. Can we imagine what the church would have lost, into what misconceptions of Christ's message it would have wandered, how far in the lapse of the centuries it would have forgotten the meaning of Calvary, had not the broken bread and the consecrated cup stood before it, ever speaking with silent eloquence and working with spiritual power? Christians may differ, as they have throughout the centuries, in their explanation of how or in what sense the sacred elements are the body and blood of their Lord; but no one who has partaken of the sacramental meal humbly and with earnest desire for more spiritual life, can doubt that in this communion he has met the Master and become more truly one with Him.

The Passover meal was the last untroubled hour in the earthly life of Our Saviour. After its final words of comfort and instruction had been spoken, its earnest prayer been offered and its psalm of thanksgiving been sung, Jesus went forth with His disciples to Gethsemane. And there the peace and joy that pervaded the Last Supper disappeared, and anguish of soul overpowered Him in increasing measure. He began to be sorrowful, "sore troubled, greatly amazed, exceedingly sorrowful even unto death." Once more He was transfigured before them, but now the transfigura-

tion was a manifestation of His inward agony. That somewhat awkward phrase of our King James Bible, "to be very heavy" (Matt. 26:37), is the translation of a Greek verb denoting a sorrow like that of homesickness,—an overwhelming feeling of loneliness and longing. His soul seemed at the point of death. Even the companionship of His most intimate disciples could not help Him now. Bidding them watch, He withdrew a little distance, "about a stone's cast," and knelt in prayer and presently fell on His face upon the ground. There, in the silence of the midnight, with the full moon shining down upon the ashen leaves of the gnarled olives and spreading a network of tangled light and shadow across the silent form; there with three apostles struggling in vain against a strange heaviness which weighed them down in slumber, and eight sitting in ignorance by the entrance of the orchard, and one already on the way with the enemy to give the kiss of betrayal; there on that Thursday night centuries ago the Saviour of the world wrestled in sore anguish of spirit. We catch but a glimpse of His agony. Our eyes, too, are heavy. We hear His cry "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from Me"; our hearts are touched by it; but when we seek to extend our sympathy, we are powerless. The sorrow is too great for us; its cause is beyond our comprehension. We cannot watch through such an hour. And so we sit in

dullness, unable to offer the help our Master seeks, until somehow, we know not how, the struggle is ended, peace is found, Gethsemane is past; and the Master comes to us saying, "Sleep on now, and take your rest."

"We ne'er can know such sorrow as that night
Pierced to the heart the suffering Son of God;
And every earthly sadness is but light,
To that dark path He trod."

It may seem almost irreverent to examine closely into this hour of Christ's life. We are like prattling children in the presence of some awful tragedy; and our explanations are only pitiful exhibitions of our inability to comprehend. Yet the record of Gethsemane is set before us, and we do well to ponder it. Perhaps we can enter just a step into its mysterious shadows. Before we do so, let us put aside indignantly the suggestion that the agony in the Garden arose from fear of death or of the tortures of the cross. Why! every day we see men face death without fear; and feeble, old men and delicate maidens have gone to the scaffold, the stake, the lions, with hymns of rejoicing. Fierce as were the pangs of the cross, the hours upon it were no more full of physical suffering than those when in our own land the Indians with every kind of fiendish torture slowly did to death the missionaries who came among them in the name of the Master; yet these mar-

tyrs were in spirit untroubled and praised God with their last breath. If Jesus drew back in dread of crucifixion, the conduct of His followers is more heroic than His own. No! we must look deeper for the bitter dregs of the cup that was pressed to His lips. His sorrow was superhuman: its force came from the full divinity which was joined with His perfect humanity.

Consider first what death must mean to a sinless being. We shrink from its pain or from the separation of soul and body. These to Christ were the least of its terrors. By sin came death, and the sting of death is sin. Picture, if you can, how sin must appear to one who is sinless; and remember that death was sin claiming Christ's body as its prey; death was the seeming triumph of Satan over the Son of God. Our Lord shrank, not from its pain, but from its pollution. The very thought of its foul familiarity was agony. Major André, when sentenced to die, begged to be shot as an honourable soldier rather than be hung as a common felon. Intensify this feeling of disgrace a thousand times, and we have but a faint conception of what the stain of death must seem to one whose life has been unsullied by sin. Imagine the feelings of a noble woman about to fall into the hands of bestial savages; and then to strive to imagine what Christ must have felt as He saw Himself confronted by the loathsome embraces of death.

Consider next the special circumstances that intensified the anguish of His last hours. He must die,—the perfect obedience by which the redemption of a disobedient race was made possible must not stop short of death; but need death be made doubly bitter by an accumulation of sorrows? Christ's heart was full of love to all about Him,—to His disciples, His friends, His nation, all mankind. But now His disciples were to forsake Him; one of the Twelve would sell Him for the price of a slave, another would deny Him with oaths and curses. His own nation through its priests and rulers was hounding Him to death; its most honoured council would prostitute itself to secure that end, turning a solemn trial into a travesty, stooping to petty insults and showing Satanic malice. The great Roman government would lend a hand in these proceedings, consenting to become the instrument of a murder, suffering its soldiers to abuse a helpless prisoner until their malice was sated. And the common people, for whom He had laboured unceasingly, and towards whom He had shown constant compassion and beneficence, would be transformed into a wild mob, crying, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!", choosing a robber upon whom to bestow their favour, and chuckling in glee as they watched His dying agonies. If death must come, need it come with such accompaniments? May there not be

some solace of human sympathy,—some gleam of sunshine in the darkness of human hatred? Must all the worst passions of fallen man hold high carnival around the Christ as He enters the valley of the shadow? Shall not this cup, at least, be taken from His lips?

Once more, consider how Christ's sympathy made Him enter into all of our human life, and claim it as His own, while at the same time, divine omniscience showed Him how polluted that human life is. He had become a man; and all that pertains to men was a part of His own estate. He had come down among a race of lepers; and their deformity and foul disease,—so feebly recognized by them, so plainly seen by Him,—was His by adoption. He had cast in His lot with them; and the agony which they ought to feel, He could not escape. There beneath the olives of Gethsemane, the burden of the race was rolled upon Him; and His keen sympathy made it fully His own. "Of the living and of the dead and of the unborn, of the lost and of the saved, of His own people and of strangers, of sinners and of saints, all sins are there. It is the long history of a world, and God alone can bear the load of it:—hopes blighted, vows broken, lights quenched, warnings scorned, opportunities lost; the innocent betrayed, the young hardened, the penitent relapsing, the just overcome, the aged failing; the sophistry of mis-

belief, the wilfulness of passion, the tyranny of habit, the canker of remorse, the wasting of care, the anguish of shame, the pining of disappointment, the sickness of despair; such cruel, such pitiable spectacles, such heartrending, revolting, detestable, maddening scenes; nay! the haggard faces, the convulsed lips, the flushed cheeks, the dark brow of the willing victim of rebellion:—they are all before Him now, they are upon Him and in Him. They are with Him instead of that ineffable peace which has inhabited His soul since the moment of His conception. They are upon Him; they are all but His own" (Newman). It was this which made Him a man of sorrows throughout His life; it was this in special measure which formed the bitterest agony of Gethsemane. There He who knew no sin was made sin for us that by becoming one with us He might make us one with God. Can we wonder that the burden crushed Him to the earth? That when He died upon the cross, He died, not from the torture of crucifixion, not from the thrust of a Roman spear, but from a broken heart,—broken because of the sins of the world?

"If it be possible;" but it was not possible. There was no other way save this. The Son of Man must suffer. Oh, my brothers! as we stand within the shadows of Gethsemane, and dimly see the travail of Christ's soul; as we watch the red

drops gather upon His forehead, and hear the cry of anguish break from His lips,—do we not begin to realize what sin is in His sight, and what that love must be which impelled Him to assume it for our sakes? We think lightly of the touch of pollution; but look at Jesus as it lays its hand upon Him. We rest in peace, counting iniquity a trivial matter for which an hour of penitence, a moment of good resolve, can atone; but see the price Christ had to pay that He might ransom us. Gethsemane means little to many men; but what did it mean to the Son of God when He knelt within its darkness centuries ago? "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow."

"Behold your King! Though the moonlight steals
Through the silvery sprays of the olive tree,
No star-gemmed sceptre or crown it reveals
In the solemn shade of Gethsemane:
Only a form of prostrate grief,
Fallen, crushed, like a broken leaf.—
Oh! think of His sorrow that you may know
The depth of love in the depth of woe.

Behold your King! Is it nothing to you
That the crimson tokens of agony
From the kingly brow must fall like dew
Through the shuddering shades of Gethsemane?
Jesus Himself, the Prince of Life,
Bows in mysterious, mortal strife.—
Oh! think of His sorrow that you may know
The unknown love in the unknown woe.

Behold your King! With His sorrows crowned,
Alone, alone in the valley is He:
The shadows of death are gathering round,
And the cross must follow Gethsemane.
Darker and darker the gloom must fall,
Filled is the cup; He must drink it all.—
Oh! think of His sorrow that you may know
His wondrous love in His wondrous woe."

—(Havergal.)

# X

## THE MOUNT OF THE CROSS

"A PLACE, called the place of a skull, where they crucified Him." Can we find that place today and the tomb in a garden nigh at hand? Centuries ago the mother of Constantine thought she had found them, and built a church upon the spot. That church enlarged and altered, burned and rebuilded, desecrated and reconsecrated, held at times by Persians, Saracens, Crusaders, Turks, as well as Christians, still stands today. No other building in Christendom is so full of appeals to superstition and ignorant piety. In it the site of every incident of the last hours of Jesus is shown to credulous pilgrims,—where He was bound, where He was scourged, the holes for the three crosses, the place where His friends watched afar off, the slab on which His body was anointed, the tomb itself and the angels' place within it, the tombs of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathæa, the spot where He appeared to Mary His mother and to Mary Magdalene, and even such absurdities as the rock rent by the earthquake, the footprints of Christ on a stone and the grave of Adam. Also,

no other sacred building, reveals so clearly the strife that has torn the church of Christ until it is no longer His seamless garment. The Greeks, the Latins, the Armenians, the Copts and the Abyssinians, all have their special sections of the edifice, and jealously watch and sometimes fight one another, so that the Turks, when they held Palestine, kept a guard in the church to repress such outbreaks. It is, indeed, a dead Christ, who is worshipped in this church of the Holy Sepulchre. In recent years the church has been a cause of contention among archæologists, also, some maintaining and others stoutly denying that the ground it covers was outside the city walls in the days of Jesus and so could have been Golgotha. There seems no immediate prospect that their dispute will be settled, and most of us feel little interest in the matter so long as the church presents such a travesty of the Christian religion.

Another possible site for Calvary better suits the mood of the reverent visitor, though its identification is equally uncertain. This is the low, rounded hill just outside the northern wall of Jerusalem and close to the road that starts for Galilee from the Damascus Gate. Its summit has been used as a Moslem cemetery, and fortunately has thus been kept free from buildings. Its shape and the two excavations in its side make it look somewhat like a skull with empty eyesockets. A rock-cut tomb in a garden not far away is guarded

GORDON'S CALVARY

Whatever may be said by scholars, the reverent visitor cherishes this spot as "the place of a skull where they crucified Him."

as possibly that of Joseph of Arimathæa. Of course, there is no statement in the Gospels that the cross stood on a hill,—the term Mount Calvary is late; but the name " skull " may have been given to a hill thus shaped, and not—as some hold—to a place of execution. Facts are so few and so unimportant in this matter that we can let them be thrown aside for sentiment. Certainly, here is a place outside the present walls most accordant with him who would muse on Calvary's story. There are no crowds of curious, irreverent tourists, no demonstrations of grief and devotion by ignorant pilgrims, no strife of sects, no atmosphere of superstition,—nothing to disturb a quiet meditation upon the incidents of that Friday when with the cry, " It is finished," our Lord bowed His head and died.

With the exception of a few rare spirits like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathæa, the Sanhedrin had become a unit in the decision that Jesus must die. It was, as Caiaphas said, expedient for them all. The Pharisees recognized that if the teachings of Jesus were accepted, their whole interpretation of the Law and all the importance and authority they gained through it, were ended. The Sadducees knew that a rupture with Rome, such as they supposed Jesus was striving to create, would destroy, probably the whole nation, certainly their own comfortable and profitable relations with the Roman government. The

chief priests, who drew enormous revenues from the temple worship and were constantly increasing them by cunning exactions, feared that Jesus would rouse a successful revolt against their practices. With one voice all said, "This Galilean must be put out of our way."

Open violence to Jesus was impossible because the people would resent it. Whatever was done, they must not be offended; even the Sanhedrin dared not face a tempest of popular wrath. But what could be done? An Oriental, then and now, turns to assassination as the quickest and easiest way to dispose of an enemy. If Jesus were found some morning with a dagger in His heart, no one would inquire very carefully whether this was suicide or murder; and the disciples without their leader would be powerless to avenge His death. But Jesus in public was always surrounded by a band of followers who unconsciously served as a bodyguard; during the weeks preceding the Passover He was in retirement where His enemies could not find Him; and during the Passover He never spent a night within the city, and had no fixed abode outside its walls. While vainly seeking opportunity to end His life, the Sanhedrin unexpectedly found that one of the disciples stood ready to betray Him. Judas for thirty silver shekels could be hired to guide them to a place where they might seize his Master when only the little band of apostles was with Him. This made

the matter simple, and they acted promptly. In the shadows of Thursday night they and the power of darkness had their hour, and Jesus was delivered up to His enemies. The so-called trial by the Sanhedrin, which followed His arrest, was an empty form, observed partly to satisfy their own uneasy consciences, partly to justify their action if His friends should question it. The verdict was fixed in advance, and the examination of the prisoner only confirmed it. Had the Romans not taken away the power to inflict a death penalty, or even had Pilate not been in the city, the Sanhedrin might possibly have dared to end His life by stoning, and on the morrow have reported that He was put to death for blasphemy. As it was they had to hand Him over to the Procurator for execution.

The next chapter in the tragedy,—the trial before Pilate,—is chiefly important as a further revelation of the malignity of the Sanhedrin. It put the guilt of Christ's death still more clearly upon His own nation. Pilate is often represented as a weak, sceptical ruler, who could jest with Jesus, delude himself into peace of conscience by washing his hands, and send his prisoner to the cross with a sneer at both Him and His enemies. Such a representation does Him injustice. That he was selected by the Roman emperor to govern the most difficult and rebellious of all the provinces and held his office for ten years, shows that he

was not a feeble or careless official; and his stout struggle to secure the release of Jesus is proof that he was disposed to be an upright judge. Evidently he was better acquainted with the claims of Jesus than the Sanhedrin supposed. As a prudent governor he had kept watch of His movements within his own domains, even as Herod had in Galilee and Perea. The triumphal entry would not have been allowed unless the Roman authorities had recognized that it was a religious and not a political demonstration. The demand for a guard to arrest Jesus may have brought the matter afresh to Pilate's mind the previous evening; and, if dreams take their form from waking thoughts, the dream of Pilate's wife would indicate that he had told her what was on foot. It is even possible that, as the wife of Herod's steward was a follower of Jesus, so some of Procla's attendants may have been His disciples, and her belief that He was a just man may have arisen from more than the impression of her dream. The statement that Pilate knew that for envy the chief priests wished Jesus put to death, certainly shows his clear grasp of the situation. Though we may not be ready, like the Abyssinian church, to enroll him among the saints, we ought to give him credit for his repeated efforts to prevent the crime upon which the Sanhedrin was bent. He defended Jesus until it became evident that to save Him he

must risk his office and perhaps his life; under the circumstances we could not expect more.

Pilate's resistance took the Jews by surprise, and carried them to lengths from which in cooler moments they would have drawn back in horror. Their cry, "His blood be on us and on our children," appalling as the words seem to us, and terrible as was their sequel forty years later, was simply an emphatic assertion of their belief in the prisoner's guilt and their readiness to bear the responsibility of His execution. But only the urgency of bloodthirsty desires and the recklessness of passion could have called forth the declaration, "We have no king but Cæsar." Rather than acknowledge the Christ, they bowed the knee to the Roman emperor. It was not the rabble but the rulers who made the avowal. And these words, spoken by the official heads of the nation to the official representative of Rome, formed an open, irrevocable surrender of the Jewish national life. In their refusal to accept Jesus as Messiah, the Jews had committed religious suicide; now in their eagerness to compass His death, they likewise committed political suicide. Henceforth they were dead in the sight of God and of man.

"Then they crucified Him." Only a morbid mind will linger over the bodily sufferings of Jesus before and during the crucifixion; and to make them prominent is unprofitable. Physically His death upon the cross has often been paralleled;

but spiritually it remains forever transcendent. Let us, then, seek reverently to learn the mind and heart of our Lord as He passed into the valley of the shadow of death. We have watched Him at Gethsemane; now we will watch at "the place which is called Golgotha."

The revelation of the soul of Jesus, as He offered up His life, is in the so-called Seven Words of the Cross,—His utterances during the hours of crucifixion. The first was when they nailed Him to the cross. The manner of crucifying varied somewhat. In the present instance it is simplest to think that the soldiers first nailed or tied together upon the ground the two pieces of wood that formed the cross, then stripped the victim and bound and nailed him to it, and finally erected it with its burden. We can imagine the screams and curses and entreaties that filled the air when the cruel spikes were driven into the hands and feet of the two thieves. But when in like manner the Divine Victim suffered, there was heard only the cry, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Stretched there upon the cross, looking up into the hard, pitiless faces of the executioners who bent over Him, mallet and spikes in hand, looking beyond them into the depths of the cloudless sky, shuddering in agony as the great nails crunched through flesh and bone, Jesus uttered this prayer,—a prayer for His murderers. The torture of His body was disregarded in His

pity and love for these ignorant, brutal men. Can we wonder that the Roman centurion, watching the scene and hearing the prayer, recognized that here was a prisoner such as he never had seen before, and said afterwards, "Truly this man was the Son of God"?

Now the soldiers began their tedious watch around the crosses: and to while away the time divided among themselves the garments of the crucified, casting dice for a seamless frock which could not be divided. They had brought along their lunch; and as they ate, they jeered at the pretentions of the miserable Jew who was hanging in silence above them. They held up the canteen filled with sour wine, inviting Him to take a drink from it; and they pointed to the placard they had nailed above His head, chuckling at its absurdity, and saying, "If thou art the King of the Jews, save thyself." Horrible blasphemy, must we call it? True; yet I would rather give account for those ignorant Roman soldiers in the day of judgment than for men who revile the Son of God in our own land and day.

The place of crucifixion was near the public road where all who passed by could see the crosses. The priests were fearful lest some sympathy might be kindled for the sufferer who hung there with the remarkable inscription above His head, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." So they stayed by, and took the lead in railing at

the Crucified and deriding His claims. The people caught their spirit, and vied with one another in shouting abuse and ridicule. "Ha! thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it again in three days, save thyself! Let the Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, that we may see and believe. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him. He saved others, Himself He cannot save." The spirit of reviling reached even the two thieves. Possibly they hoped to win a little favour and help by joining in the cries; possibly in their torture they were ready to curse anybody and anything. The cries of sufferers on the cross often were unceasing oaths and curses. Presently, however, a change came over one of the two men. Something in the silent, unreproachful endurance of Jesus awed him. Perhaps he already knew a little about the life and claims of the Messiah from Nazareth, and the longer he watched Him, the more he felt that this man was what He claimed to be. Turning to his companion he rebuked him; and then turning to Jesus he said humbly, "Jesus, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom." The prayer at such an hour was a triumph of faith; and it was answered even beyond the asking. The penitent thief addressed Jesus as the Messiah of the Jews, he was answered by Jesus as the Saviour of the world. He prayed that in the unknown future, when all wrong should be righted, Jesus

would not forget one who had been a fellow-sufferer; he was promised that his Lord, going side by side with him through the dread portals of death, would crown his faith with immediate blessings. For the second time upon the cross Jesus spoke, "Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Was that promise, given at such a time, under such awful circumstances, an empty word?

A third saying followed soon. Certain little hints in the gospel record lead us to conclude that as soon as Jesus was nailed to the cross, the apostle John hastened to the city to bring His mother to the place. She came attended by other women, her relatives and friends. Her tears and look of horror and despair showed that the prophecy of old Simeon, when she presented her wondrous child in the temple, was now fulfilled; "Yea, and a sword shall pierce through thine own soul." Never did such a mother mourn for such a son. Once more Jesus turned from His own sufferings to minister to her need. The disciple whom He loved would best take a son's place with Mary, and would himself find comfort in caring for her in His stead. He dared not speak her name or reveal her relationship, lest the rabble be roused to vent their spite upon her and her companions. "Woman, behold thy son," He said to Mary; "Behold thy mother," He said to John. It was the only service He could render,—the last tender

act of a perfect sonship which remains our perpetual example. Presently John led Mary away, unable longer to endure the sight before her.

Three Words of the Cross: first, a prayer for the ignorant; second, a promise to the penitent; third, a charge to the beloved. They are Jesus' farewell to men,—His last words to those for whom and with whom He has laboured throughout the years. Now He must give Himself wholly to the final struggle with the powers of sin and death, the crowning work of redeeming love.

The hours had crept on from nine till noon. The sun stood high overhead, and its rays beat down with torturing fierceness upon the silent sufferer. But now a strange shadow crept across the landscape: the air was full of gathering gloom; there was a hush and pallor like that which come before the tempest and the earthquake. Fear seized the spectators; the taunts and ribald cries and mockery ceased; men stood with bated breath; and the gathering, deepening darkness slowly blotted out all sight of the cross. Nature was showing her abhorrence of the scene, her sympathy with Him who is her Lord. The Father was veiling the anguish of His Son from irreverent and hostile eyes.

What followed next we understand only in part. The mystery of the atonement baffles human thought; but we know, for it has been plainly told us, that Christ "bore our sins in His own body

on the cross that we being dead to sin should live unto righteousness." There in the noontime darkness, when the watchers spoke to one another in awed whispers, and the stoutest heart felt a thrill of terror, and earth stood waiting her deliverance with trembling expectation, there in dread solitude the last great work of man's redemption was wrought, the ransom for our sins was fully paid. Brothers, sisters, sinstained and helpless,—our hope is in that love which suffered for us on Calvary.

The hours wore on; it was almost three o'clock, and the end was near. Slowly the darkness lifted, the sun reappeared, and men breathed with new confidence. Then unexpectedly there came from the silent sufferer a strange cry, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?—My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" It is a cry of sore anguish; and some scholars, who never question that Jesus was a good man, interpret it as a cry of despair. Strange that they do not see the inconsistency! When the prophet of old prayed, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like His," he knew, what later ages have constantly confirmed, that a man of God never dies in despair. The faith that carried him onward to the last hour does not suddenly vanish then. The cry of Jesus is the opening sentence of the twenty-second Psalm. What the words meant in His lips at that hour we hardly dare try to conjecture.

They reveal an awful loneliness of spirit,—the loneliness and separation that arise when sin is like a black cloud between the soul and God; and yet there is in them the unwavering trust, the unbroken intimacy, that ever looks to God as "My God." The cry arises not from physical pain but from a distress of spirit that links Calvary with Gethsemane; and it is caused by that same cup, whose bitterness seems unendurable, yet whose contents to the very dregs are being drunk in obedience to the Father's will.

Another cry just a little later, "I thirst," seems to have been forced from the Saviour's lips not so much by physical craving, fierce as that must have been, as by remembrance of the same Psalm. In the hours of the travail of His soul, the mind of the Saviour was filled with Scripture prophecies; He was fulfilling the purpose declared from the beginning. One of the soldiers, hearing the cry and moved by an impulse of compassion which the terror of the darkness had quickened, dipped a sponge in the sour wine that formed part of their noonday meal, and raised it to the parched and blackened lips. Some of the others plucked up courage and tried, as men will try, to disguise their former fears by a coarse jest about Elijah,—a pun on the cry of anguish they had just heard. But it was too late now for much of mockery. After accepting the draught, Christ paused for a mo-

ment, as if to summon His energies for the end, and then with a loud voice cried, " It is finished," " Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit "; and bowing His head He gave up the ghost. As that cry rang forth upon the air, earth trembled, the stones rolled away from the sepulchres on the hillside, and the great veil hanging before the Holy of Holies in the temple was rent from top to bottom. Bethlehem and Calvary both are full of the miraculous; and their contrast reveals the tragedy of Christ's years upon this earth. The life that began with a burst of heavenly glory and a song by angelic choristers, ended with darkness and earthquake and visions of the dead.

Only a word more, and the story is told. Evening was coming on, and the Jews were growing uneasy lest the presence of three criminals hanging upon crosses by the city walls should pollute the sanctity of their feast. So at their request Pilate authorized his soldiers to hasten the death of the crucified. The legs of the thieves were broken which speedily ended their sufferings. But on coming to Jesus the soldiers were surprised to find Him already dead. Such a speedy death was remarkable, for often a person on the cross lingered for days and died at last from sheer exhaustion. The brutal thrust of a Roman spear made evident why death came so speedily: the Saviour died on the cross but not of the cross;—

He died of a broken heart. Overcome by grief and spiritual anguish, worn out by the struggle with sin, He uttered one last, loud cry of victory; and then that human heart, surcharged with the guilt and woe of man, was torn asunder. Christ died of a broken heart; broken by the sins of the world,—our sins. "He was wounded for our transgressions, He died bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." This is the one sad, awful fact that fills our thoughts as in imagination we see His mangled body taken down from the cross. This is the one great truth I pray we may carry with us, as we turn from our study of Calvary.

Saviour, Saviour, strange was thy dying cry,—
Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani!
Darkness and mystery shrouded Thine agony;
Sunlight grew sombre when falling on Calvary;
Friends all abandoned Thee; foes mocked Thy helplessness;
Torture and thirst racked Thy frame with a sore distress:
Still, O Saviour, these did not cause Thy cry,—
Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani!

Saviour, Saviour, why was that dying cry,—
Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani!
Why did the Father so far away seem to be?
What hid His face in the hour of Thine agony?
Why did He thus refuse fully His own to bless,
Leaving Thee dying in terrible loneliness?
Lord, Redeemer, what caused that awful cry,—
Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?

Saviour, Saviour, I caused that dying cry,—
Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani!
Death was the penalty, Lord, Thou didst pay for me;
Mine were the sins that so heavily lay on Thee;
Mine the pollution which thus made Thee start aghast;
Mine the iniquity, breaking Thy heart at last:
Yea, O Saviour, Thou in my stead didst cry,
Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani!

## XI

## THE MOUNT OF THE ASCENSION

PALESTINE is becoming less and less the land which Renan once called "a fifth gospel, torn but still legible." Modern ways and ideas are rapidly supplanting those that had survived with little change from Bible times. The transformation began before the Great War, but has gone on much more rapidly since. Railways, good roads and the automobile have opened travel to hosts of tourists, who rush over the land, breakfasting at Jerusalem, inspecting Jacob's well before lunch at Shechem, taking afternoon tea at Nazareth, and arriving at Tiberias in season for a sail on the Lake before dinner. Their coming has wrought countless changes, and has made any sacred site along their route a place of possible profit for its proprietors. So we find that the Mount of Olivet is increasingly covered with buildings, and two edifices upon its summit are rival claimants as occupying the spot from which Jesus ascended. Fortunately the real site, we may believe, is still free from such invasion. Luke tells us that it was "over against Bethany," not far from the little village. The old footpath from

BETHANY

Near this village of Lazarus, now little more than ruins, is the unmarked spot where Jesus ascended unto the Father.

Jerusalem led straight up across the summit of Olivet, and being much shorter than the road, would be followed by the Master and His disciples; and somewhere on that path, as He drew nigh to Bethany, He spoke His farewell words and "while He blessed them, He parted from them and was carried up into heaven." Let the exact spot remain unknown; it is better so.

The ascension of Jesus is only a minor incident in the events that followed His resurrection; but the resurrection itself is a central fact in Christian evidences. Jesus foretold that it would be. Whenever the Jews, challenging His claims, asked "What sign showest Thou unto us?" His answer was "The sign of the prophet Jonah,—the sign of the temple raised up in three days after you destroy it." The apostles recognized that an important part of their mission was to bear witness of His resurrection. And the Christian church throughout the centuries has made "He is risen" a foundation-stone of its faith. "If Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain, your faith also is vain." A dead Christ and a sealed tomb leave the world without hope. But if Christ be risen, then arguments against miracles are vain, for this is the greatest miracle of all; arguments against the divinity of our Lord are vain, for this certifies it; arguments against Christianity are vain, for this sets the seal of truth upon the teachings of its Founder; arguments against immortal-

ity are vain, for Christ is become the first fruit of them that are asleep. The dishonest seeker after truth will turn aside to all sorts of minor points. He will be deeply concerned about the fish story of Jonah and the frog story of Moses; he will be ready to wrangle over knotty theological problems,—foreordination, the origin of evil, eternal punishment; he will be greatly scandalized by the conduct of Old Testament saints and Twentieth Century church members. But he will refuse to seek an honest answer to the central question, "Did Jesus rise from the dead; and if so, whose Son is He?"

When, in sincere search for the truth, we study the resurrection, we find no fact in ancient history more firmly established by trustworthy testimony. The apostles certainly were fully convinced that their Lord had risen; otherwise the Christian church never could have come into existence. Men are not willing to sacrifice fortune and life for a truth they only half believe. The earliest written records of the church are the epistles of Paul. Four of these, viz., I and II Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans, practically all critics admit to be genuine; and they show that less than thirty years after the crucifixion, Paul, who was one of the keenest, most critical of men, with every reason to question the fact closely, and abundant opportunity to examine the evidence, firmly believed in the resurrection and was making it the central

topic in his preaching. Paul's conviction was that of the rest. "This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we all are witnesses." We must acknowledge, however, that the fact there was such belief does not make such belief a fact; it may have been created by deliberate fraud or by excited imagination. Let us consider this a moment.

If there was fraud, who perpetrated it? Evidently either Jesus or His disciples; they are the only parties interested. Could it have been Jesus? Apart from the improbability that He still was alive when taken down from the cross, and the physical impossibility that a man who had been through the tortures inflicted upon Him could retain strength enough to accomplish the deception, is there not a moral impossibility arising from the character of Jesus? Whatever else He was, He certainly was honest; and any such trickery by Him is incredible. How then about the disciples? Did they conspire to cheat the world into a belief that Jesus had risen? The difficulties in carrying out any such scheme were enormous; and who of the Twelve, when Jesus died, was in a frame of mind to grapple with them? Moreover, what would the apostles gain by the fraud? If they knew that Christ was an impostor and the resurrection a hoax, why should they leave their homes and journey from city to city, hated, scourged, thrown into prison and put to death, for the gospel's sake? And how could they become the great-

est of moral teachers, and stoutly proclaim that any form of deceit is an abomination to God and the kingdom of heaven is shut against him who maketh and loveth a lie, while all the time they were preaching a falsehood and conspiring to prevent its detection?

If we grant that the apostles were honest in their belief that Christ had risen, may they not, nevertheless, have been mistaken? Was the resurrection anything more than an illusion? Did Mary Magdalene in some hysterical moment imagine she saw her Lord and heard His voice; and then the other disciples, catching her hysteria, begin likewise to see visions and hear voices? Or was there, indeed, some spiritual manifestation, some vision of the night, some revelation from the unseen world, which brought to the disciples the assurance of His life beyond the grave, but was distorted in their account of it into a bodily resurrection? Both of these theories have been seriously propounded. But according to either, what became of Christ's body? If the disciples stole it away, they could not be deceived into believing in a resurrection. If it still slumbered in the tomb, then the story of an empty tomb could at any moment be refuted. Renan admits that the question is not easily answered, but says it is unimportant. The more I consider it, the more difficult becomes the answer and likewise the more important. Again, a ghostly vision would never be interpreted

as a bodily resurrection, for the simple reason that the former was a familiar idea to the disciples, the latter was not. They were ready to believe in spirits; but only with difficulty did Jesus convince them that He was present in the body.

Concerning any theory that the resurrection was but a delusion, notice one thing: imagination works along the line of least resistance and cheats us into believing what we already desire and expect,—the wish is father to the fancy. So, if Christ's disciples had been confidently expecting a resurrection of their Master, they possibly might have wrought their minds up to a pitch where they could cheat themselves into believing that it had taken place. But everything shows they had no thought that He would live again,—they sorrowed without hope. When the women found the sepulchre empty, they supposed the body had been transferred to another grave. When Mary Magdalene reported that she had seen the Master alive, all scoffed at her story. When Thomas was told that Jesus had appeared to the other apostles he declared that he would not believe they had seen more than His ghost, unless he should touch the wounds with his own fingers. A set of men harder to convince, it would be difficult to find; and all because they had no expectation of a resurrection. Surely they could not be carried away by fancy to believe that their Master had risen from the

dead, when the thought of it was wholly absent from their minds.

These are but a few arguments out of many. Even apart from the others they serve as strong proofs that Christ's resurrection was neither a fraud nor a delusion, but a wonderful fact. And when the other arguments are added we have a mass of evidence that would seem sufficient to convince any except those who are determined not to believe.

Another question arises at this point. If Christ rose from the dead, why did He manifest Himself to the disciples only,—why not to the people and the Sanhedrin? His crucifixion and death had been public and indisputable, why not make the resurrection the same? Several answers suggest themselves. As regards the Sanhedrin we may be sure that the effect of this last and greatest miracle would have been the same as that of the previous ones. It would not convince; it would only exasperate. They explained all of Jesus' miracles as the result of His league with Satan. The greater the miracle, therefore, the greater their fear and hatred. What they lacked was not evidence but preparation of heart. As regards the common people, a manifestation of the risen Christ would doubtless have thrown them at once into the wildest excitement and kindled their Messianic frenzy afresh. They would have cried out once more for insurrection and war against Rome,—the very

thing Jesus had been guarding against all through the previous years. To manifest Himself to the people would destroy His work up to the present, and force Him to begin anew.

A still deeper answer to this question is found in the character of the faith Jesus seeks to develop in His followers. Faith that rests upon sight is not faith at all. A thousand followers who believed in a risen Christ because they had looked on His pierced hands and touched His bleeding side, would not have the spiritual power of a score who believed because their hearts burned within them at the unseen presence of their Lord, and their understandings were illumined as He opened to them the Scriptures. It is the quality of belief and not the quantity of believers that is important. The last Beatitude that Jesus spoke was, " Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed." The truths concerning Christ are not to be gained and treated like truths concerning ancient history, astronomy, mathematics. Christian knowledge necessitates obedience or disobedience. And it is purposely framed to mold our character, by developing in us faith, hope and love. We walk in darkness, holding the hand of an unseen Lord, that, as St. Peter expresses it, " the proof of your faith may be found unto praise and honour and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom not having seen ye love; on whom though now ye see Him not, yet believing ye rejoice with joy un-

speakable and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."

Jesus after His resurrection could not manifest Himself to the world, for such manifestation would be injurious instead of helpful. He could appear to the little band only who already loved Him and longed for His presence but were overwhelmed with sorrow and had no thought of His resurrection because they did not as yet understand His words about it or the predictions of the Scriptures. In their state of mind His appearance to them was exceedingly helpful. It comforted, educated and inspired them as nothing else could. It changed their whole attitude, and made them ready for Pentecost and witness-bearing. The forty days between the resurrection and the ascension was a time when their faith pushed from bud to blossom, and when spiritually they grew up from little children into men and brethren.

How full and frequent the manifestations of Jesus to His disciples during this period were, we cannot say. We have mention in the gospels of less than a dozen, and particulars of only six or seven. But the opening statement of the Book of Acts seems to indicate more numerous appearances and prolonged conversations. There was much for Him to teach His disciples. In the earlier days He had often been forced to say, " What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." Now the time of revelation, when they could study

His gospel in the light of His cross, had come; and within the soil that had been furrowed by the anguish of Good Friday, the despair of Saturday, the overwhelming joy of Easter Sunday, any seed He might sow would find a fertile resting place. Then, too, before His ascension Christ must accustom them to think of Him as ever present, even if unseen. He did this by repeated appearances and disappearances. Whenever they specially longed for Him or when, perhaps, they were thinking least about Him,—in hours of doubt and sorrow, in hours of worship or work or recreation, in the dusk of evening or in the grey mists of early morn, at any moment and anywhere, their Master might appear, coming in His old form, resuming at once the old relations; and then, when He had given them the teaching and the benediction they needed, suddenly He was gone again, and once more they were alone. Thus increasingly they came to recognize that they never really were alone,—that He was ever with them though they saw Him not. And so, at last, when He ascended to His Father, the disciples did not feel that they were forsaken and that He was far away. The ascension brought no sad sense of separation; on the contrary, they "returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and were continually in the temple, blessing God." Indeed, the ascension was not a matter of great importance to them. They never emphasized it in their preaching, nor treated it as

marking a special period in Christ's history. To say that Christ had ascended to His Father was in their thoughts perfectly consistent with saying that He was with them always even unto the end of the world.

What was the nature of that body in which Christ thus manifested Himself to the disciples? Was it simply the old body, revivified but unchanged, as was the body of Lazarus? Or was it a spiritual body such as we shall have when we rise from the dead? Or was it something midway between the two,—not altogether that body which Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathæa laid in the tomb, nor yet the body which John on Patmos saw in revelation? The opinion universally prevalent in former times was that Christ rose with a spiritual body, such as that with which each of His followers shall one day rise. In support of this opinion it is pointed out that the risen Saviour in many ways is different from the Jesus who was put to death. He appears and disappears suddenly; He comes into a room when the doors are shut; He talks with His disciples, and they do not recognize Him until He chooses to make Himself known. There is something so ghostly about His appearance and acts that those who see Him think they see a spirit. But, on the other hand, Jesus evidently insists that His body is an earthly one. "See my hands and feet that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones,

as ye see me having. If you still doubt, give me something to eat and watch me as I eat it; for a spirit never eats." By word and deed He strives to make His disciples recognize that He is the same Lord who was crucified, now living and able to resume the old earthly life. Unless we believe that He sought to deceive them, we must conclude that His resurrection was simply the quickening of the physical body which had slumbered in death through the hours of the Jewish Sabbath. " I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again."

If Christ came forth from the tomb with the same body that was nailed to the cross, how can we explain the seemingly new property it possessed of becoming visible or invisible at His pleasure? I say seemingly new, because we are not sure that there were not instances of such invisibility during His public ministry. When, for example, we read that, as they took up stones to cast at Him, He " hid Himself " or " was hidden " and went out of the temple (John 8:59), what can we understand except that suddenly He veiled Himself from the sight of His enemies? Under the circumstances in no other way could He—perhaps, we might say, would He—conceal Himself. But was such disappearance a miracle, thus contradicting the oft-repeated statement that Jesus never wrought a miracle for His own advantage? In former days our only answer must be Yes; but

with our present knowledge of the properties of matter, possibly we may answer No. Certainly the electrons which make up the atoms of matter are units of invisible force; and there is nothing absurd in the idea that matter may be at one moment visible and at another invisible, and that the will of Jesus, having perfect control over His body, might make it appear or disappear. Shall we ever grow wise enough and mighty enough to do the same with our bodies? Who is so rash as either to affirm or to deny it?

After the lesson of His perpetual presence was fully learned, Christ must go from His disciples out of the visible into the unseen world. Why this necessity, He Himself has explained: "It is expedient for you that I go away." Not expedient for Himself, for the angels in heaven, for the spirits of just men made perfect, but expedient for His disciples. "For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send Him unto you." We fashion for ourselves other reasons why Christ's departure was expedient for us. We emphasize the fact that now He can be present spiritually with each one of His followers, whereas a bodily presence would confine Him to a fortunate few. We point out that faith grows stronger and deeper with an unseen Saviour. All well enough; but not the reason Christ assigned. He said the coming of the Holy Spirit was dependent upon His departure. Why that should be we

cannot tell. It is a mystery; and our deepest explanations are shallow guesses. Rather let us accept the statement without asking why; and meditate upon the richness of the blessing. Next to the gift made possible by His death, could any be greater than this made possible by His departure? He died for our salvation; He ascended for our sanctification.

"I came out from the Father, and am come into the world; again, I leave the world, and go unto the Father." But how shall He go? How shall the Son of man resume the glory that belongs to Him as the Son of God? Shall He lay the mortal body once more to rest in the tomb? That would be to undo all the work of the resurrection. Death once conquered can no more have power over Him. Shall He, like Moses, pass forth to a mysterious and unrevealed end, climbing some lonely mountain to be never again seen by men? Nay! His life has hitherto been manifest to men, it must not now be veiled. He came as a light into the world, and He must shine until the end. Shall He, then, be carried up to heaven, like Elijah, amid a theophanic blaze of horses and chariot of fire? Such a termination might glorify the life of a man, but Christ does not need it because He is more than man.

Turn to the Book of Acts and read its opening verses. The history of the new body of Christ, which is the church, is fitly prefaced by an account

of the translation of the old body, His flesh. Once more the disciples are gathered at Jerusalem; and the Master is with them. The forty days are ended; and Pentecost is little more than a week away. Christ has taught them many things; but still there is much for them to learn, and they have not quite given up their dream of an earthly kingdom. The Holy Spirit will be their teacher presently; and their true mission as founders of the kingdom of God will then be understood. They are to be kings and priests in a grander realm than the petty principality of Palestine, and in a nobler temple than that on Mount Moriah. But the one condition of their high office is unceasing sacrificial service. "Ye shall be witnesses to me." The Greek word "witness" is that from which comes our English word "martyr." Do we recognize the bond of union between the two?

Then Christ leads the little band forth along the well remembered path towards Bethany. They pass Gethsemane, but turn not in; its bitterness is forever ended. They cross the ridge of Olivet, but look not back for a farewell view of the city; Jerusalem is the Sacred City no more. And somewhere as they draw near the familiar village of Lazarus, the last good-bye is said. With hands outstretched in benediction,—what attitude could be more beautiful and typical of the life now closing?—He parts from them. This time He does not vanish suddenly. Their eager eyes behold Him rising in

the air, borne heavenward as by the yearnings of His heart; and a cloud veils the gathering glory which no earthly eyes can look upon and live.

> "Gone beyond the highest height
> Of mortal gaze or angel's flight;
> Through the veil of time and space
> Passed into the Holiest Place;
> All the toil, the sorrow done,—
> All the battle fought and won."

While the disciples stand, still looking up in silent adoration, a farewell message comes back to them, even as a message comes back borne by the pilot-boat from a friend who has crossed the harbour-bar. Two angels speak to the little band. "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? This Jesus who was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld Him going into heaven." "Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

THE END